
LINK MONTHLY REPORT

April 2024





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2. KEY ACTIVITIES

LINK is the UK's Cash Access and ATM Network, connecting virtually all the UK's ATMs and providing communities with access to cash through ATMs and services such as cash at retailers' tills and recommending communities for banking hubs. LINK continues to operate to its usual high standard and remains well positioned to support consumers' access to cash needs through effective risk management and high levels of operational resilience. LINK works closely with its infrastructure provider and Network Members, all of whom continue to perform well.

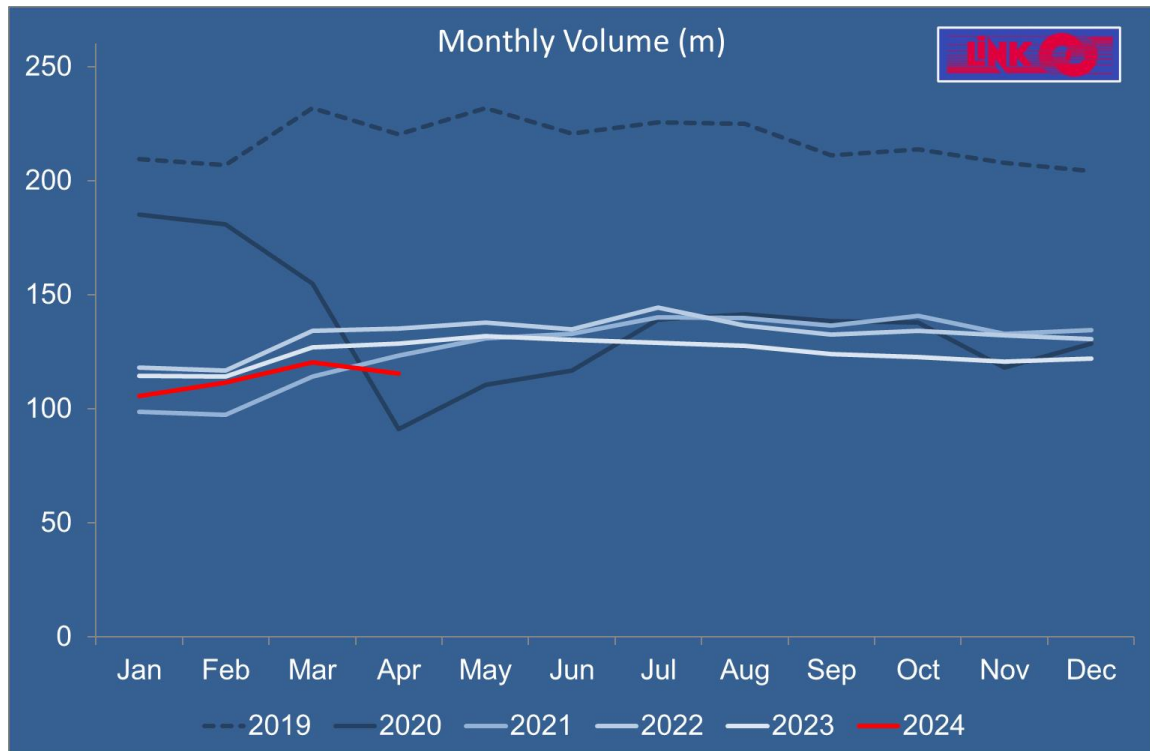
The LINK Board held a virtual meeting in early April to discuss and review recent developments with the LINK Senior Management Team in attendance. John Howells (CEO) updated the Board on the wide range of stakeholder meetings and the outline for the forthcoming Strategy Event, while the Adrian Roberts (newly appointed Deputy CEO) updated the Board on LINK's financial inclusion programmes where The Board concluded that access to cash is satisfactory and is expected to remain so.

Finally, the Board carefully reviewed the latest Risk and Finance Reports and was pleased to note that the Scheme's operational performance was as expected and remained completely satisfactory.

3. LINK VOLUMES AND VALUES

April saw volumes fall 10.2% on 2023 which is the largest fall we have seen this year so far. Some of this may be down to the poor weather and also the May Day Bank Holiday, the weekend of which fell entirely in May this year. The change year to date is -6.5% compared to -4.0% for the same period in 2023.

LINK Transaction Volumes (millions)													
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2019	209	207	232	220	232	221	226	225	211	214	208	204	2,608
2020	185	181	155	91	110	117	139	141	139	138	118	129	1,643
2021	99	97	114	123	131	133	140	140	137	141	133	135	1,522
2022	118	117	134	135	138	135	144	137	132	134	132	130	1,587
2023	115	114	127	128	132	130	129	128	124	123	121	122	1,492
2024	106	111	120	115									452

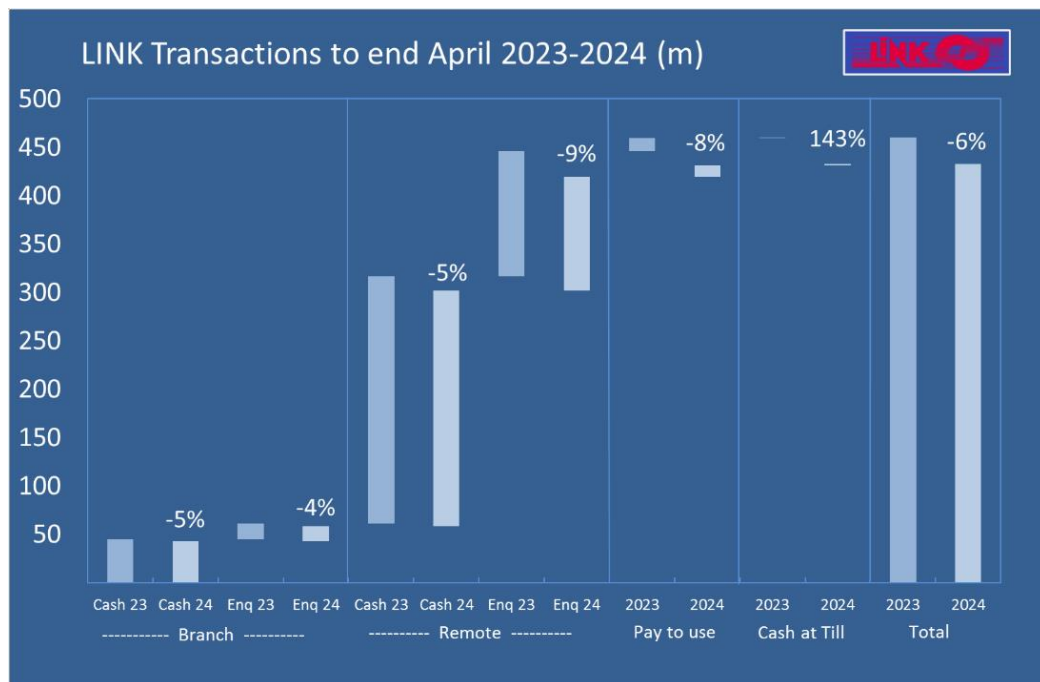
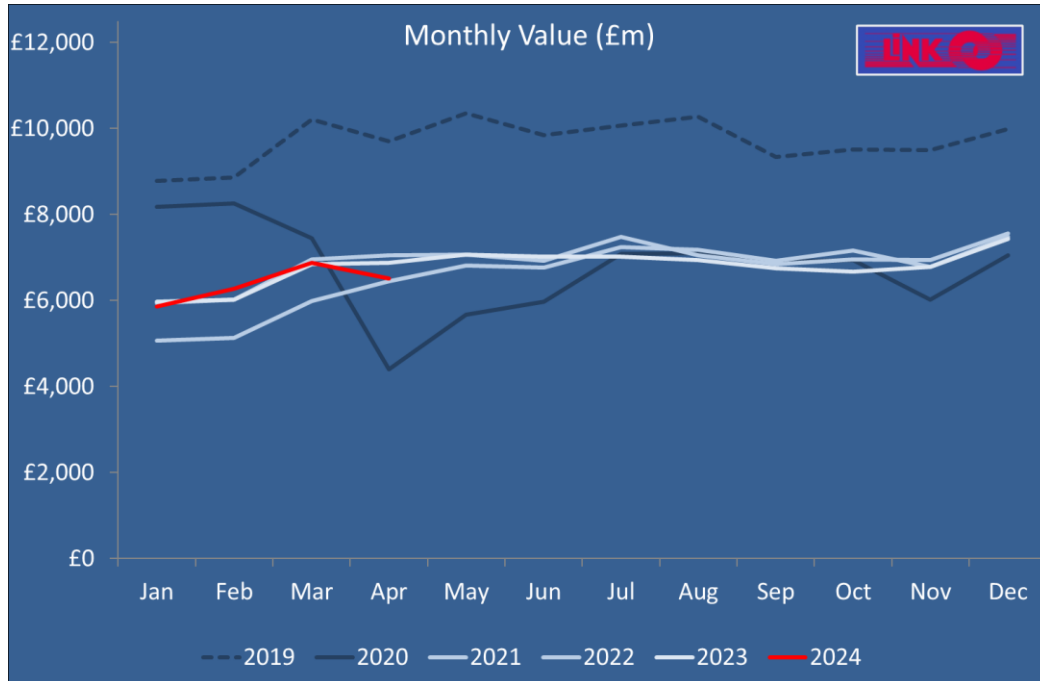


ATM withdrawal values continue to fall at a slower rate than transactions. April saw values fall 5.4% on 2023, making the change year to date, -0.7%. April was the first time this year that values fell appreciably when compared to last year.

LINK Transaction Values (£millions)													
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2019	£8,788	£8,859	£10,211	£9,701	£10,354	£9,837	£10,070	£10,271	£9,336	£9,512	£9,494	£9,985	£116,417
2020	£8,182	£8,258	£7,450	£4,399	£5,664	£5,972	£7,076	£7,105	£6,903	£6,939	£6,016	£7,044	£81,010
2021	£5,062	£5,127	£5,995	£6,446	£6,809	£6,757	£7,242	£7,177	£6,928	£7,156	£6,785	£7,478	£78,960
2022	£5,946	£6,018	£6,952	£7,047	£7,065	£6,921	£7,481	£7,054	£6,848	£6,959	£6,932	£7,558	£82,781
2023	£5,979	£6,022	£6,837	£6,883	£7,063	£7,016	£7,025	£6,931	£6,743	£6,673	£6,780	£7,435	£81,389
2024	£5,864	£6,279	£6,882	£6,511									£25,537

The average withdrawal continues to increase, £85.40, compared to 82.40 in 2023 and 66.52 back in 2019.

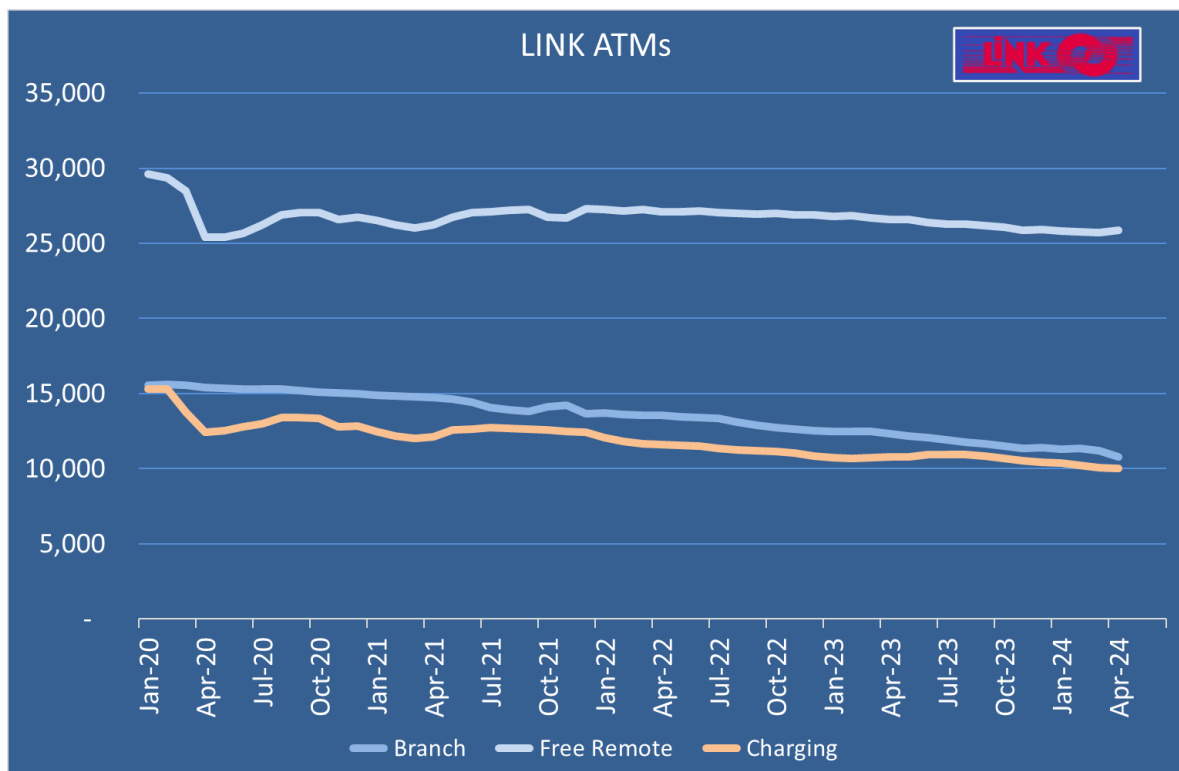
The fall in ATM transactions is not distributed evenly and the chart on the following page shows how balance enquires are falling faster than cash withdrawals. The percentage fall for pay-to-use withdrawals is also greater than that at free machines and this probably reflects falling cash use in locations where the machines are installed and also falling numbers of charging ATMs.



For more information and regular updates on cash and ATMs, see the LINK website www.link.co.uk or LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/2837871/> or Twitter/X LINK Scheme@LINK_ATM_Scheme.

4. ATM AND NUMBERS

ATM coverage across the UK continues to be broadly stable and consistent with the forecasts in LINK’s strategy, with a very slow decline in non-branch free-to-use ATMs in the past year. At the end of 2023 there were 47,711 LINK ATMs across the UK, of which 37,299 were free-to-use. In the past year, branch ATMs, (11,392) and charging (10,412) ATM numbers have declined at a faster rate than free non-branch sites as bank branches close and ATM host locations decide they no longer need charging ATMs or no longer take in enough cash to replenish them.



5. CONSUMER RESEARCH – Why do you rely on cash?

LINK does regular research on how consumers are using ATMs and cash and last month we showed how many consumers felt they relied on cash and how this had changed since the Access to Cash Review was published five years ago. For those who did rely on cash we then tried to find out why and how this has changed.

The following table shows the results. Having a choice and control over how to spend are important and it is perhaps encouraging that less people are having to use cash because they can’t get bank accounts or debit cards. Paying tradesmen remains a popular use of cash and local businesses being cash only remains an important driver of cash use.

Despite some recent media coverage to the contrary, using cash to keep guilty pleasures from others isn’t a popular reason to use cash.

Reasons for relying on cash	2019	2024	Change
I like to have a choice when paying for things	34%	43%	9%
The tradespeople I use (e.g. gardener, cleaner, etc.) only take cash	25%	33%	8%
A lot of local businesses still only accept cash	23%	29%	7%
I want to protect my privacy (i.e. avoid leaving an online record of my spending)	6%	12%	6%
Poor broadband, so cash is sometimes the only way to pay	6%	12%	5%
I am involved with a community group which only uses cash	6%	10%	4%
I like to keep my guilty pleasures hidden from others	3%	6%	3%
I don't trust banks to control the way I pay	3%	5%	2%
I don't trust the Internet with my money	5%	6%	2%
I care for an elderly or disabled relative who mainly buys things using cash	2%	3%	2%
I worry that I will overspend, so I try to stick with cash	9%	10%	1%
I feel more in control of my money when I use cash	20%	21%	1%
I rely on other people to buy things for me and I pay them in cash	4%	4%	1%
My physical or mental health can make it hard or unsafe to use digital payments	2%	2%	0%
I can't afford to go into debt so I use cash for budgeting	7%	7%	0%
I can't get/ don't have access to a bank account	7%	5%	-3%
I can't get/ don't have access to a credit card	5%	0%	-4%
I find it easier to manage my household budget using cash	16%	10%	-5%
I can't get/ don't have access to a debit card	7%	0%	-6%

6. MAINTAINING ACCESS TO CASH

LINK's Financial Inclusion Programme continues to be effective in maintaining free access to cash for consumers in rural, remote and deprived communities across the UK.

To-date, 128 lost free-to-use ATMs have been targeted for replacement and resolved, 60 through Direct Commissioning, 19 through Premiums and the remaining 49 by regular installation programmes.

Overall, over 3,500 ATMs get a subsidy as part of LINK's work on financial inclusion. LINK is now using social media to further raise awareness of the initiative and continues to welcome requests for ATMs. See the LINK website for more details

<https://www.link.co.uk/consumers/request-access-to-cash/>.

On 14th July 2023 the PSR published its first Annual Review of Specific Direction 12 (SD12), designed to support LINK as it continues to do all it can to fulfil its commitment to maintain a broad geographic spread of free-to-use (FTU) ATMs. The PSR has concluded that SD12 is working well and should remain in place and it will undertake another review in spring 2024. The report, (link below) notes that *"LINK's policies and processes to maintain, install and/or replace FTU ATMs are working well to ensure a broad geographic spread. Looking across all cash access points (i.e., ATMs, Post Office, retailer cashback), our latest data suggests that coverage is good – 96.5% of the UK population live within 2km of a cash access point, with 99.8% living within 5km"*.

<https://www.psr.org.uk/publications/general/first-annual-review-of-specific-direction-12/>

7. LINK FOOTPRINT REPORT

LINK is committed to maintaining free access to cash for many years to come through an extensive network of ATMs, which covers the same area as it did on 1st February 2018. This includes Protected ATMs, which are machines 1km or more away from another free ATM and are therefore considered vital by LINK for their local community.

In the last 5 years, the total population living within 1km of free cash access has increased from 89.5% to 89.6%.

These Protected ATMs are analysed every month and the changes are summarised below.

March 2024		Change
Total Protected ATMs	3,504	11
Live ATMs	2,982	-
ATMs No Longer Transacting	522	11
Temporarily out of action	36	3
Investigations with operator underway	9	-
ATMs Confirmed as Closed	477	8
ATMs not being replaced (a)	395	6
ATMs Targeted for Replacement	82	2
LINK directly commissioning a replacement	21	2
Resolution not Possible (b)	61	-
ATMs previously targeted for replacement and now resolved (c)	128	1

The latest Footprint Report can always be found on the LINK website at: <https://www.link.co.uk/initiatives/financial-inclusion-monthly-report/>.

Notes - LINK Footprint Report

(a) ATMs are not replaced where consumers have free access to cash over the counter from a nearby post office, where the site was not accessible to the public, where there are security concerns, or where there is assessed to be no community detriment following a site visit by LINK.

(b) Where it is not currently possible to replace a Protected ATM for reasons such as no suitable premises within 1km, no willing site owners to host an ATM or no operator willing to deploy an ATM. LINK may still consider alternative actions and these sites remain on file.



(c) Sites which were targeted for replacement through the Programme and now have free access to cash via an ATM, whether through Premiums, Direct Commissioning or through the free competitive market.
