

5.6 million thanks to PayPoint retailers over Christmas

Welwyn Garden City - 11 February 2014: PayPoint, the UK's leading retail and payments services provider, has revealed that consumers across the UK topped up their gas or electricity prepayment meters at PayPoint 3,873,291 times on the Christmas and New Year bank holidays in 2013/14. The figures demonstrate how vital it is for consumers with pay-as-you-go energy meters to have easy access to top-up facilities all day, every day, including bank holidays.

In addition to energy meter pre-payments, 10,448 customers collected their pension or benefits in cash from PayPoint on one of the bank holidays. In total, PayPoint was used 5,594,062 times over the three days by consumers for a wide variety of payments.

Commenting on the figures, **Seamus Smith**, Managing Director of PayPoint, said: *"What these figures show is just what a valuable service PayPoint is to its customers. It also gives further evidence, if more were needed, of the massive contribution that our retailers make to their local communities."*

"Most of the shops that offer their customers PayPoint are open long hours from morning to late evening, seven days a week, and are usually open bank holidays as well. In fact, half of all shops with PayPoint were open on Christmas Day itself, with as many as nine out of ten open in some parts of the country. As a result, 225,539 people were able to top up their gas or electricity on Christmas Day and 251 were able to collect their pension or benefits in cash. No other retail chain, including the Post Office, offers such a high level of service over the holiday period."

PayPoint analyses transactions over Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day (and 2 January in Scotland) by Parliamentary constituency. Lyn Brown's West Ham constituency in London saw the highest number of transactions on the bank holidays, overall and for energy pre-payments, while Manchester and Glasgow constituencies featured highly. (See below for details)

David Lammy's Tottenham constituency featured more heavily on Christmas Day itself, having the highest number of people using PayPoint overall, and the second highest number topping up their gas or electricity meters. Birmingham made an appearance among the top 10 constituencies with heavy energy top-ups on Christmas Day.

The collection of cash benefits and pensions took on a different pattern to other transactions, with London constituencies featuring less than those in other major cities of Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds. Residents in Mahmood Shabana's Birmingham Ladywood constituency were most likely to pitch up at a PayPoint shop to collect their pensions or benefits. Simon Danzduk's Rochdale, although 10th in the table for the three days, had the highest number of pension/benefit cash collections on Christmas Day, at 37.

Overall, almost 12,500 shops with PayPoint facilities were open on Christmas Day (49.8 per cent). The highest proportion open on Christmas Day, 90.4 per cent, was Alan Keen's Feltham and Heston, with residents of Ealing – North and South – being particularly well-served. Three-quarters of shops were open on Christmas Day in 31 constituencies, and a further 284 constituencies had 50 per cent or more open. Every constituency in the UK had at least one PayPoint shop open on Christmas Day.

"Energy prepayment is just one of many of the services provided by PayPoint to address the needs of businesses and consumers from all walks of life,"

added **Seamus Smith**. *“We operate the largest network of its kind in the UK, with over 26,100 outlets. Over 99% of the population in urban areas live within one mile of a PayPoint or within five miles in rural areas. While other branch networks claim similar national coverage, none comes near to PayPoint for the number, choice and accessibility of outlets close to where they live, despite the fact that we receive no subsidy to enable it to achieve this.*

“We share this commitment to serving our customers with the thousands of retailers whose shops are at the very heart of their communities. Last November, we helped to promote Small Business Saturday but this research shows that they deserve everyone’s support every day.”

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NOTES TO EDITORS

PayPoint handles cash payments for the utility, housing, water, telecoms, media, financial services, transport, retail, e-commerce and public sectors. More than four million households have prepayment gas and/or electricity meters that they are able to ‘load’ at PayPoint terminals. This analysis looks at the number of times those individuals loaded their prepayment meters at PayPoint on Christmas Day and Boxing Day 2013 and New Year’s Day 2014 – the three bank holidays. In Scotland, the analysis included 2 January 2014, which is also a bank holiday.

The tables below show the ten constituencies in England, Wales and Scotland at the top of each analysis. Detailed information on other constituencies or groups of constituencies covered by your publication can be obtained by contacting **Peter Brooker** on 01707 600356 or by emailing him at peterbrooker@paypoint.com.