

5 Sep 2014

West Belfast consumers get free-to-use cash machine

Belfast, 30 April 2013: Consumers in West Belfast can now access their cash free of charge as a result of joint work by the Consumer Council, LINK and PayPoint.

Converting an existing cash machine in Conlon's Mount Alverno Service Station, from fee-charging to free-to-use, PayPoint's move will allow residents in five adjacent areas within Upper Springfield and Whiterock, free access to their money for the first time.

Welcoming the conversion, Consumer Council Chief Executive, Antoinette McKeown said: "This is part of an ongoing campaign by the Consumer Council and LINK to ensure everyone in Northern Ireland has access to a free-to-use cash machine. Since the programme began in 2006, we have seen 55 cash machines installed in areas of lower income, and of the identified 71 target areas, only five now remain. In practical terms, it means people do not have to pay up to £2 each time they withdraw £10, which soon adds up.

"The Consumer Council will continue to work with LINK, PayPoint and other cash machine operators, as well as local consumers and their political representatives, to target other areas which do not have a free-to-use cash machine. We would also like to hear from local community leaders and businesses who could help to identify appropriate sites. They can contact the Consumer Council on 0800 121 6022 or go to LINK's website www.link.co.uk and complete a Suggest a Site form."

Consumers can also check where the nearest free-to-use cash machine is via LINK's 'ATM locator' facility on its website.

John Howells, LINK CEO, added: "This is great news for access to cash in West Belfast. We have been working with the Consumer Council, MLAs and LINK Members to get a free-to-use ATM into this area for a long time and I am sure it will be a huge and popular facility for the local community."

Seamus Smith, Managing Director of PayPoint, added: "PayPoint is committed to helping retailers meet the needs of their customers and local communities. We strive to bring social benefits to local communities, whether through our payments terminals or by providing cash machines that benefit local residents in, what is for many, a tough economic time. We are delighted to have been able to convert this machine as part of our wider corporate responsibility and ambition to improve financial inclusion, which, in this case, we have achieved by ensuring that West Belfast's residents have free, quick and easy access to their cash."

[Click here for photo.](#) *Pictured at the free-to-use cash machine at Conlon's Mount Alverno Service Station are Maire McNeice, Proprietor; Jennifer McCann MLA; Antoinette McKeown, Chief Executive of the Consumer Council and Kerry McMonagle, PayPoint.*

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For further information, please contact Keelin Kelly at the Consumer Council on 028 9067 2488 / 07799 032203 or email kkelly@consumercouncil.org.uk

Notes to Editor

- The Consumer Council is an independent consumer organisation, working to bring about change to benefit Northern Ireland's consumers. The Council campaigns for high standards of service and protection and a fair deal for all. It also carries out research, gives advice and publishes reports and other publications. It deals with individual complaints about buses, trains, planes, ferries, natural gas, electricity, coal and water. For more information, visit www.consumercouncil.org.uk
- LINK is the cash machine network provider
- PayPoint is the UK's leading cash payments network and an independent operator of cash machines
- Conlon's Mount Alverno Service Station is at 703-705 Springfield Road, Belfast
- Cash machines provide other services such as a balance check, a mini statement, accepting cheque deposits or mobile phone top-ups
- Cash machines are the most popular and commonly used method of accessing cash with 71 per cent of all cash acquired this way in 2011 (UK Cash and Cash Machines – Payments Council, 2012)
- Consumer Council research (The Price of Being Poor – July 2011) shows that many people like to withdraw small amounts at a time to manage their budgets.