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Dean Lockhart MSP will today lead a debate in the Scottish Parliament on changes to the LINK network which threaten to cut off free access to cash across Scotland.

Hundreds of free to use cashpoints are at risk of removal due to plans announced by the UK's largest cashpoint network.

LINK runs a network of 70,000 cashpoints and has announced that it is cutting its interchange fee from 1st July 2018. This fee is paid by card issuers to ATM operators and its reduction will significantly impact the funding of cash points and has the potential to put many at risk.

With many rural and deprived communities across the region relying on easy access to their cash, Dean will call on the Payment Services Regulator to step in immediately to stop these plans.

The campaign was launched by consumer organisation Which? and the Federation of Small Businesses who's petition has so far attracted over 75,000 signatures from across the UK.

Dean Lockhart, Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary said:

''I am pleased to be given the opportunity to highlight this important issue for consumers across Scotland in the Scottish Parliament this week.

''At a time when bank closures increase across Scotland, so too does the reliance on free-to-use ATMs.

''Demand for cash remains high, especially in rural and deprived communities and these facilities often act as a crucial replacement for the lack of banking services.

''These proposals from LINK will undoubtedly also hit our high-street and small businesses, many of whom rely upon a customer's ability to access cash.

''Access to cash is absolutely vital to local growth in communities across Scotland and I urge the regulator to take action to guarantee that consumers can access their money if access to cash is threatened.

‘‘I have therefore written to the Chairman of the Link Scheme to call for the proposed changes to be reconsidered – and for the Link Network and member banks to take another look at the impact of these proposals on consumers, small businesses and communities.’’