

## Feedback on the National Trial of Contactless Donation Units in Cathedrals

In November 2017, a Goodbox Pro donation unit was placed in Romsey Abbey. This signalled the start of a 12 month trial of self-service contactless donation units in cathedrals and large churches around England.

The cathedral sites joined the trial gradually, and each onboarding process was a learning experience for both the cathedral staff and the suppliers. The main supplier, Goodbox, gave the cathedrals use of their donation units for free.

The aim of this trial was to understand whether cathedrals and large churches would benefit from contactless donation points, and to develop some best practice.

We received feedback on three types of donation unit– the Goodbox Pro, the Payter unit by Goodbox (which is an interim solution until their own table-top unit is fully developed) and the Payter device by Data Developments.

### Goodbox Pro:



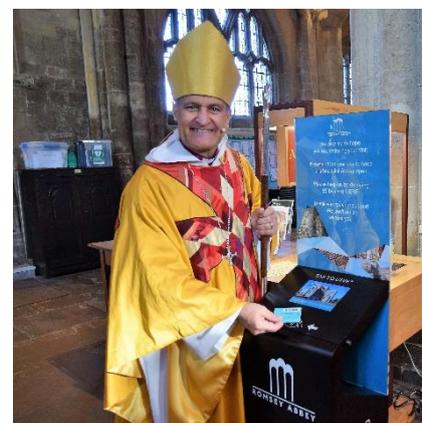
### Payter by Goodbox:



### Payter by Data Developments:



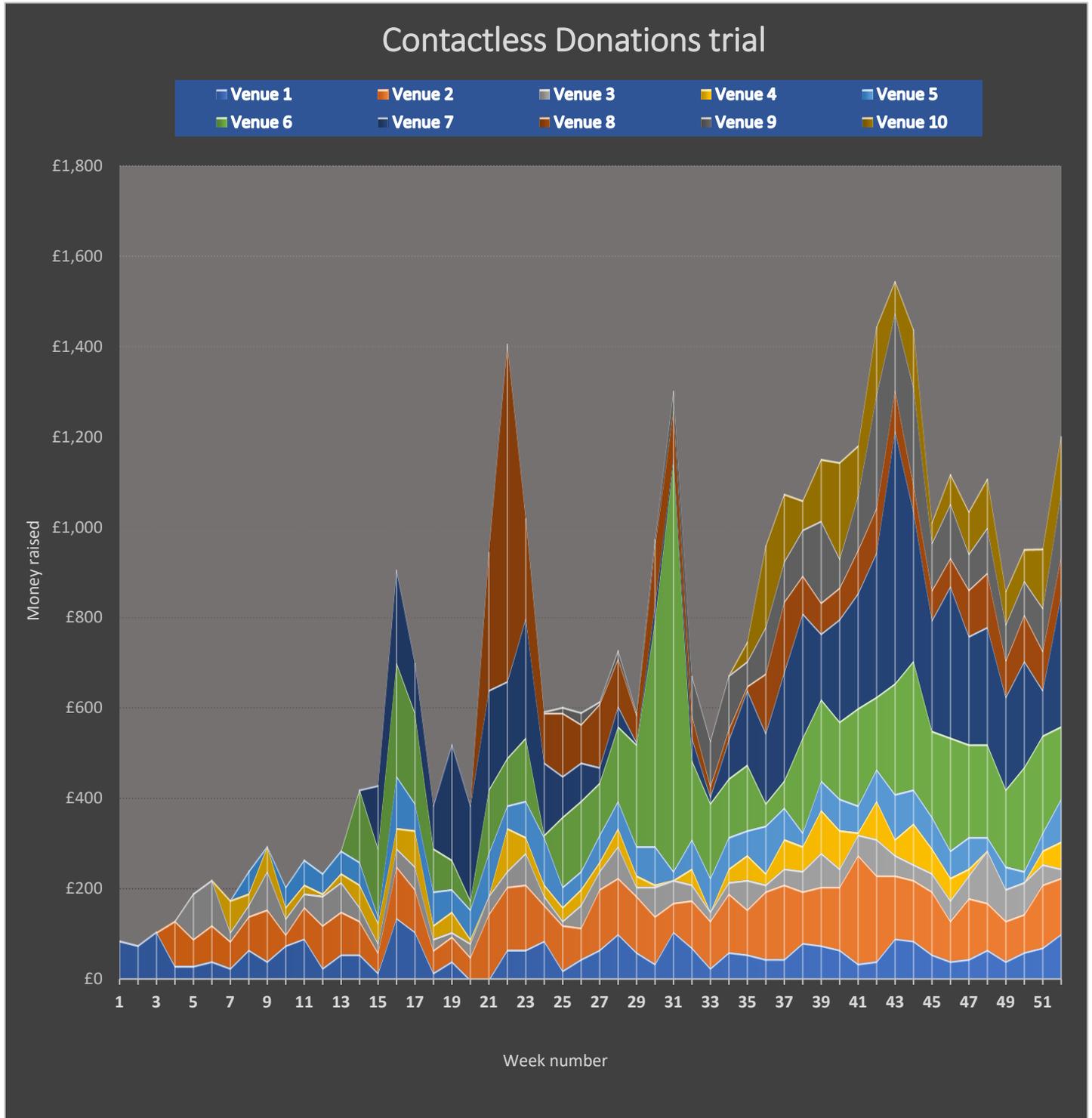
The Goodbox Pro units in situ at the first site, Romsey Abbey:

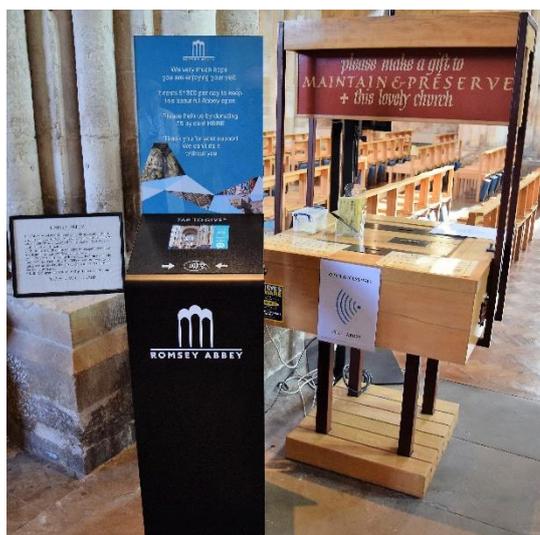


(Photo credit Ken Gibson)

The chart below shows the amount of donations raised during the 12 month trial period.

Total income to date = £37,437





The GoodBox Pro alongside the cash collection box in Romsey Abbey

## Location and visibility of the units

Regarding where to place donation units, most cathedrals advised that trial and error is the key, along with being flexible. The best locations are a prominent position and clearly visible, near the entrance or in the middle of the main cathedral space, or near the exit.

*“There are definite 'hot spots' - you just need to be flexible and imaginative to find them”.*

Romsey Abbey

*“Following the introduction of a large red banner next to the unit with the words 'DONATE HERE' and a contactless symbol, we found that donations went up significantly.”*

Gloucester Cathedral

Chichester Cathedral tried it in the cathedral café, and concluded this was the least successful location. St Paul's were the only cathedral in

the survey who charge an admission fee. When they stationed the donations unit near the entrance they received complaints from some visitors who felt they were being charged twice.

## Other factors which affected the amount of money raised

Perhaps obviously, most venues agree that the higher the footfall, the more donations. Bank holidays or special exhibitions see significant increases in donation income.

One venue commented that tourists and visitors are more likely to donate than the service congregations, so Saturday attracts the most donations and Sunday the least.

Communication is important, and clergy mentioning the unit in services is helpful.

*“Some clergy are happy to make explicit asks (eg. at organ recitals) by asking visitors to 'buy the Cathedral a drink... and why not make it a double'. We get decent income at free events, but again, this is ideally backed up by a verbal ask.”*

Guildford Cathedral

Interestingly, very high numbers of visitors are actually detrimental with the smaller Payter unit. Gloucester Cathedral noted that on days when large events took place and there were unusually high numbers in the building, the unit was overlooked. They are keen to try portable units to combat this.

St Pauls Cathedral, with its paid entry fee, does not receive many donations from paying sightseers during the day. The volume of donations increases significantly from those attending Evensong and Sunday services.



The Very Revd Geoff Miller, Dean of Newcastle

## Best practice advice from trial sites

Advertise that the cathedral has a donation unit:

- Guides and volunteers pointing the unit out
- Signage on the back of toilet doors
- Volunteers should be careful not to obscure the terminal

### Education:

- Train volunteers, clergy and staff - why do we fundraise, and how to make an appropriate ask to visitors
- Giving volunteers a script can work well

### Other tips:

- £5 is a good amount to set the donations unit at
- A direct ask from volunteers is better when the unit is stationed at the entrance rather than the exit. If it's at the exit the exchange can be uncomfortable, as the visitor cannot say they will donate later
- Thank visitors after a donation has been made
- Churches/cathedrals should think carefully about whether they choose a standalone box or handheld. This will depend on numbers of staff or volunteers, and the quality of the ask that you think will be achieved



St Paul's Cathedral

## Problems and resolutions

Several of the cathedrals commented on how robust and reliable the Goodbox Pro unit is, and how quickly Goodbox respond when there are any issues. The problems mentioned were loss of wifi, sometimes requiring a reboot, and the need for regular battery checking. Liverpool Cathedral had some problems with loose wires preventing charging.

Leicester Cathedral, who were testing a Data Developments unit, had difficulties with the battery not charging and commented on slow response times.

Gloucester Cathedral, who were testing the Payter Goodbox unit, had problems with user understanding:

*“Prior to our unit being set at £5, some visitors seemed to be confused about how to work it (select the desired amount, etc). We created our own graphic that we displayed alongside it with some simple operating instructions.”*

The lack of facility to Gift Aid donations with the Goodbox Pro unit is also seen as a significant problem.

## Impact

Most locations agreed that the contactless donations augment cash donations, but that cash is currently still king.

*“We've increased donations this year, by a greater margin than the additional revenue from the contactless unit, so I think it has increased awareness of giving across the Cathedral.”*

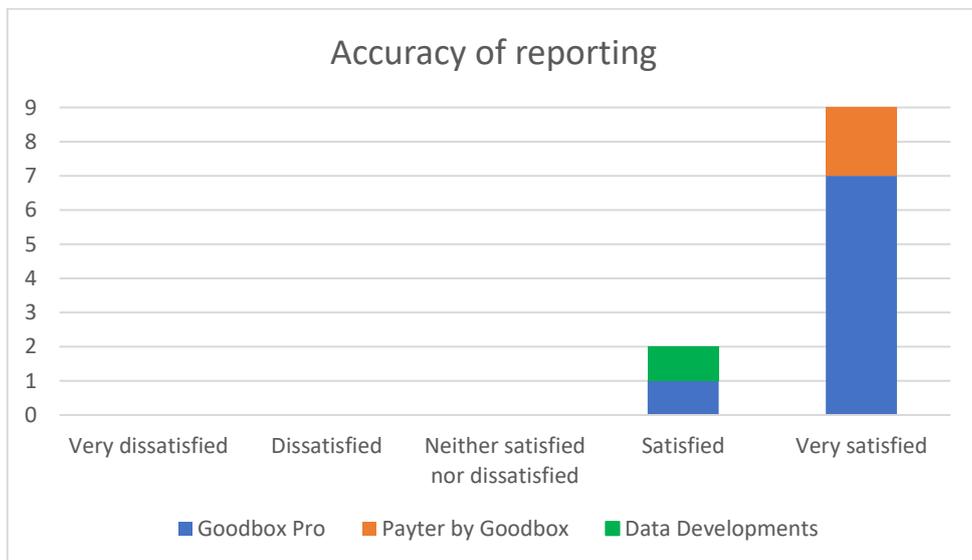
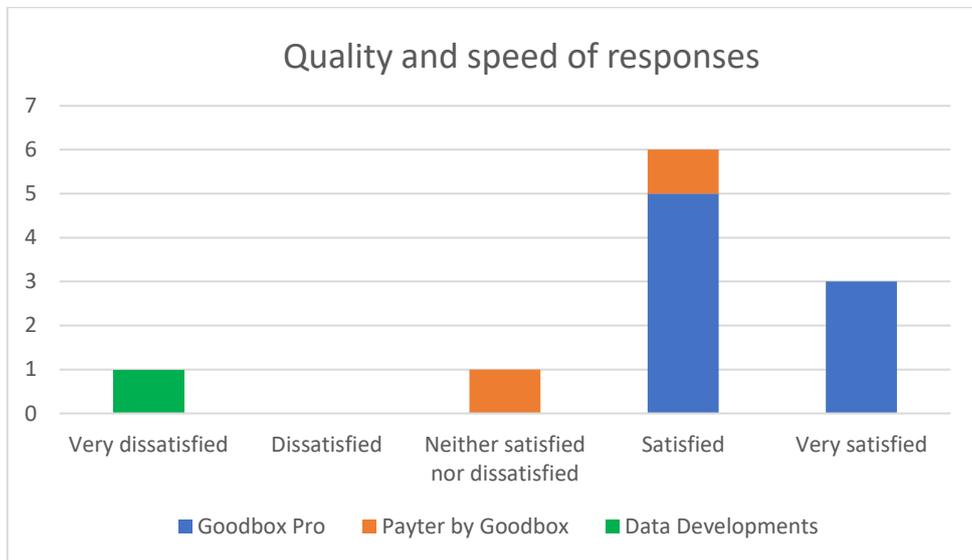
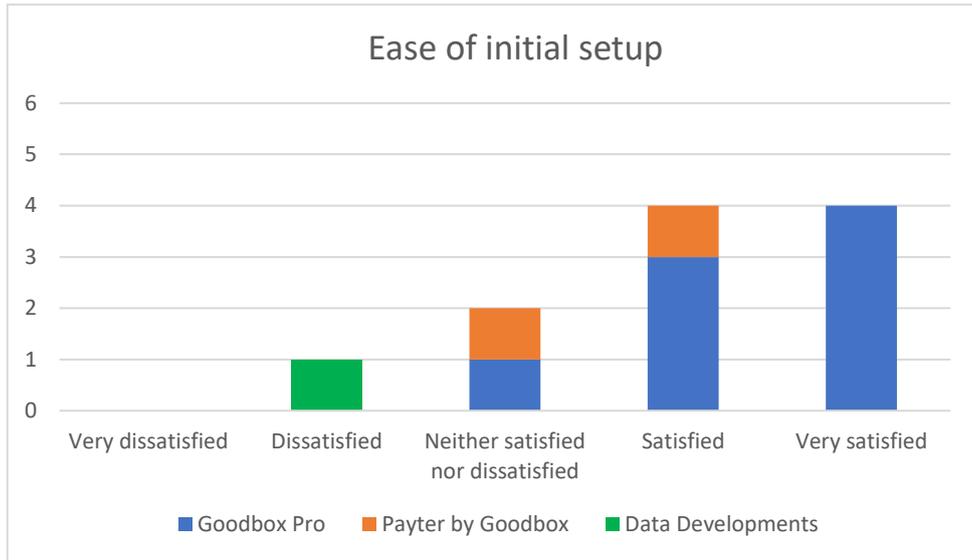
Liverpool Cathedral, using Goodbox Pro

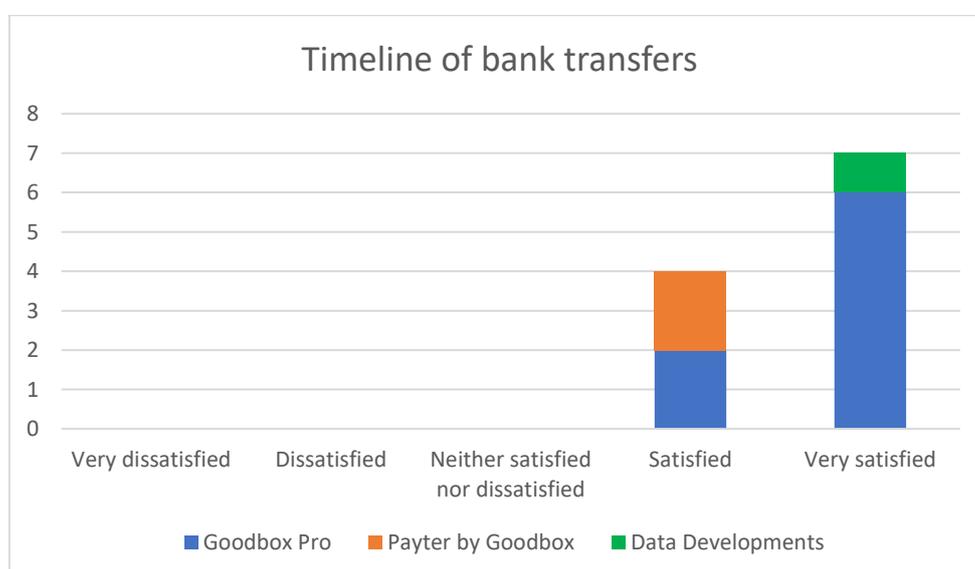
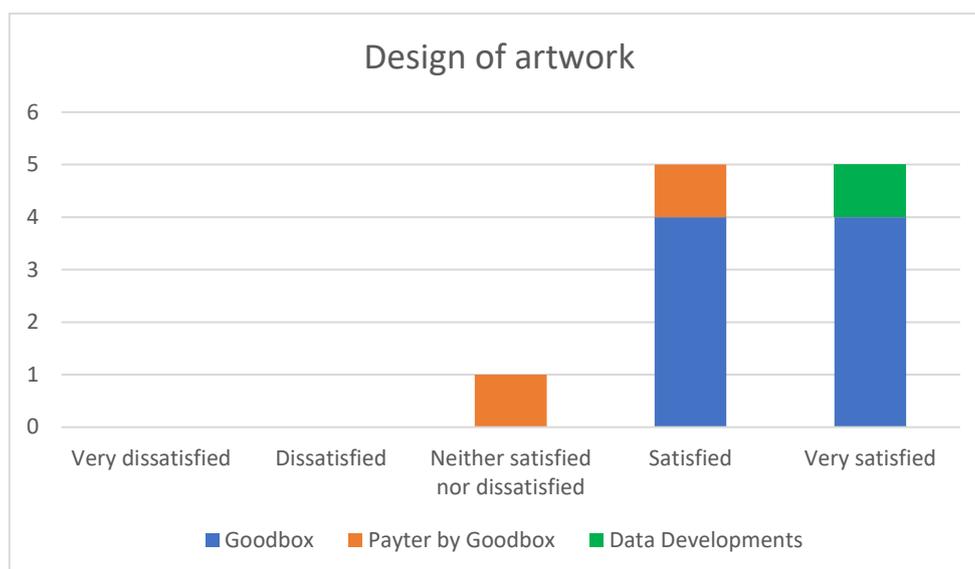
*“Anecdotally we have seen that visitors are increasingly asking for a way of donating using their contactless cards. Funds taken are much higher than a previous chip and pin card donation point that we had and which is now defunct - donations received at the contactless unit continue to rise month on month.”*

Gloucester Cathedral, using Payter by Goodbox

## Satisfaction survey

The Goodbox Pro came out top in the satisfaction ratings. In the below charts, the three types of donation unit which we have received feedback on are compared.





### Final conclusions from the trial

- Placing contactless donation units in cathedrals and large churches increases the amount of money raised.
- The donation units need to be made obvious to visitors and congregations, primarily through the location they are placed but also through other messaging.
- The Goodbox Pro is a very good piece of equipment.

### Interested in a donation unit for your cathedral or church?

Church of England and Church in Wales organisations can purchase donation units at a discount through the Parish Buying service. Register with the service for free at [www.parishbuying.org.uk](http://www.parishbuying.org.uk) to view the range of units currently available. The Goodbox Pro units will be available for purchase from early 2019.

National Stewardship Team  
November 2018