Text of Bank of England press notice of 4 December 2008
Bank of England reduces Bank Rate by 1.0 percentage points to 2.0%

The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee today voted to reduce the official Bank Rate paid on commercial bank reserves by 1.0 percentage points to 2.0%.

In the United Kingdom, business surveys have weakened further and suggest that the downturn has gathered pace. Consumer spending and business investment have stalled, while residential investment has continued to fall. Activity indicators in the rest of the world have also weakened, though the further depreciation in sterling should moderate the impact of weaker global growth on the United Kingdom. And a number of fiscal measures to boost near-term demand are in train, both in the United Kingdom and overseas. Despite the actions taken to raise bank capital, ease funding and improve liquidity, conditions in money and credit markets remain extremely difficult. The Committee noted that it was unlikely that a normal volume of lending would be restored without further measures.

CPI inflation decreased to 4.5% in October. Cost pressures have also eased. Commodity prices continued to fall back. Pay growth remained subdued. And measures of inflation expectations fell back sharply. CPI inflation is likely to continue to drop back as the contributions from retail energy and food prices decline. The direct effect of the temporary reduction in Value Added Tax will also lower CPI inflation through much of next year, with a corresponding increase in inflation in 2010.

In the November *Inflation Report*, the Committee's projection for inflation showed a substantial risk of undershooting the 2% CPI inflation target in the medium term. The subsequent decline in market interest rates and the further depreciation in sterling have raised the profile for inflation since then. But the weaker outlook for activity in the near term and the further falls in commodity prices have lowered that profile. Although the temporary reduction in Value Added Tax will lead to some volatility in inflation over the next two years, the new fiscal plans are unlikely to have a significant effect on inflation beyond that horizon.

At its December meeting, the Committee judged that, at the existing level of Bank Rate and looking through the volatility in inflation associated with the movements in Value Added Tax, there remained a substantial risk of undershooting the 2% CPI inflation target in the medium term. Accordingly, the Committee determined that a further reduction in Bank Rate of 1.0 percentage points to 2.0% was necessary in order to meet the target in the medium term.

The minutes of the meeting will be published at 9.30 am on Wednesday 17 December.

Text of Bank of England press notice of 8 January 2009
Bank of England reduces Bank Rate by 0.5 percentage points to 1.5%

The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee today voted to reduce the official Bank Rate paid on commercial bank reserves by 0.5 percentage points to 1.5%.

The world economy appears to be undergoing an unusually sharp and synchronised downturn. Measures of business and consumer confidence have fallen markedly. World trade growth this year is likely to be the weakest for some considerable time.

In the United Kingdom, business surveys suggest that the pace of contraction in activity increased during the fourth quarter of 2008 and that output is likely to continue to fall sharply during the first part of this year. Surveys of retailers and reports from the Bank's regional Agents imply that consumer spending has weakened. The outlook for business and residential investment has deteriorated. And the availability of credit to both households and businesses has tightened further, pointing to the need for further measures to increase the flow of lending to the non-financial sector. But the substantial depreciation in sterling over recent months may help to moderate the impact on UK net exports of the slowdown in global growth.

CPI inflation fell to 4.1% in November. Inflation is expected to fall further, reflecting waning contributions from retail energy and food prices and the direct impact of the temporary reduction in Value Added Tax. Measures of inflation expectations have come down. And pay growth remains subdued. But the depreciation in sterling will boost the cost of imports.

At its January meeting, the Committee noted that the recent easing in monetary and fiscal policy, the substantial fall in sterling and the prospective decline in inflation would together provide a considerable stimulus to activity as the year progressed. Nevertheless, the Committee judged that, looking through the volatility in inflation associated with the movements in Value Added Tax, there remained a significant risk of undershooting the 2% CPI inflation target in the medium term at the existing level of Bank Rate. Accordingly, the Committee concluded that a further reduction in Bank Rate of 0.5 percentage points to 1.5% was necessary to meet the target in the medium term.

The minutes of the meeting will be published at 9.30 am on Wednesday 21 January.

Text of Bank of England press notice of 5 February 2009
Bank of England reduces Bank Rate by 0.5 percentage points to 1.0%

The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee today voted to reduce the official Bank Rate paid on commercial bank reserves by 0.5 percentage points to 1.0%.

The global economy is in the throes of a severe and synchronised downturn. Output in the advanced economies fell sharply in the fourth quarter of 2008, and growth in the emerging market economies appears to have slowed markedly. Business and household sentiment in many countries has deteriorated. The weakness of the global banking and financial system means that the supply of credit remains constrained.

In the United Kingdom, output dropped sharply in the fourth quarter of 2008 and business surveys point to a similar rate of decline in the early part of this year. Credit conditions faced by companies and households have tightened further. The underlying picture for consumer spending appears weak. Businesses have responded to the worsening outlook by running down inventories, cutting production, scaling back investment plans and shedding labour. The Committee welcomed the Government's latest measures to tackle the problems in the banking system, including the creation of an Asset Purchase Facility to buy high-quality corporate debt and similar assets.

CPI inflation fell to 3.1% in December. Pay pressures have diminished. But sterling has continued to depreciate, boosting the cost of imports. Inflation is expected to fall to below the 2% target by the second half of the year, reflecting waning contributions from retail energy and food prices and the direct impact of the temporary reduction in Value Added Tax. But the impact of changes in the rate of Value Added Tax, and the gradual pass-through of the depreciation in sterling, mean the path may be somewhat volatile.

At its February meeting, the Committee noted that, although the transmission mechanism of monetary policy was impaired, the past cuts in Bank Rate would in due course nevertheless have a significant impact. Together with the recent easing in fiscal policy, the substantial fall in sterling and past falls in commodity prices, that would provide a considerable stimulus to activity as the year progressed. Nevertheless, the Committee judged that there remained a substantial risk of undershooting the 2% CPI inflation target in the medium term at the existing level of Bank Rate. Accordingly, the Committee concluded that a further reduction in Bank Rate of 0.5 percentage points to 1.0% was warranted this month.

The Committee's latest inflation and output projections will appear in the *Inflation Report* to be published on Wednesday 11 February.

The minutes of the meeting will be published at 9.30 am on Wednesday 18 February.