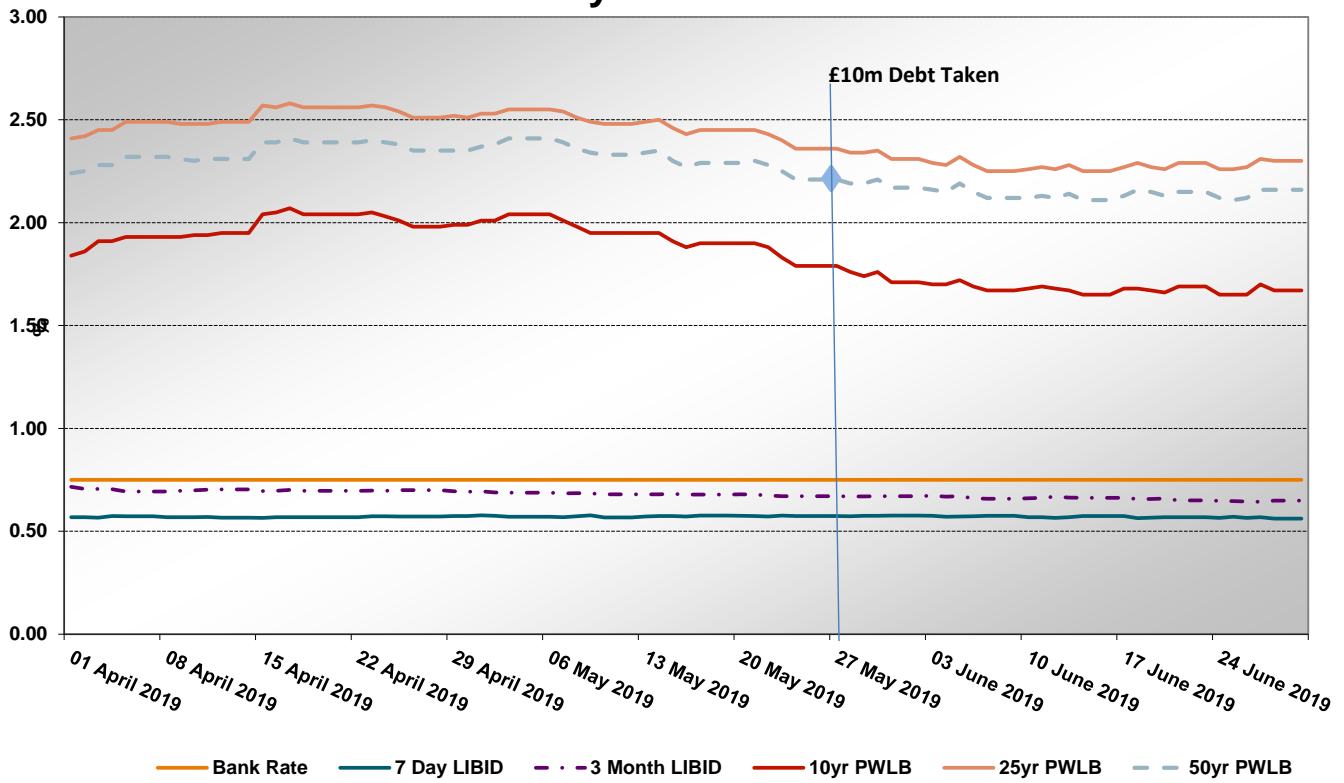


## Movement of Key Interest Rates to 30/06/2019



## Interest Rate Forecast – Link Asset Services

Link Asset Services Interest Rate View											
	Sep-19	Dec-19	Mar-20	Jun-20	Sep-20	Dec-20	Mar-21	Jun-21	Sep-21	Dec-21	Mar-22
Bank Rate View	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	1.00	1.00	1.25	1.25	1.50	1.50	1.50
3 Month LIBID	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.80	0.90	1.00	1.20	1.30	1.40	1.40	1.40
6 Month LIBID	0.80	0.90	0.80	0.90	1.00	1.20	1.40	1.50	1.60	1.60	1.60
12 Month LIBID	1.00	1.00	1.10	1.20	1.30	1.40	1.50	1.60	1.70	1.80	1.80
5yr PWLB Rate	1.50	1.60	1.70	1.80	1.90	2.00	2.10	2.10	2.20	2.30	2.40
10yr PWLB Rate	1.80	1.90	2.00	2.10	2.20	2.30	2.40	2.50	2.60	2.60	2.70
25yr PWLB Rate	2.40	2.50	2.60	2.70	2.80	2.90	3.00	3.00	3.10	3.20	3.30
50yr PWLB Rate	2.30	2.40	2.50	2.60	2.70	2.80	2.90	2.90	3.00	3.10	3.20

## Economic Background – Link Asset Services

**UK.** After only tepid annual **economic growth** of 1.4% in 2018, growth in quarter 1 was unexpectedly strong at 0.5%. However, this was boosted by stock building ahead of the original March Brexit deadline so quarter 2 is now expected to be zero or slightly negative. After the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) raised **Bank Rate** from 0.5% to 0.75% in August 2018, it is little surprise that they have abstained from any further increases since then. We are unlikely to see any further action from the MPC until the uncertainties over Brexit clear. If there were a no deal exit, it is likely that Bank Rate would be cut in order to support growth. Nevertheless, the MPC does have concerns over the trend in wage inflation which peaked at a new post financial crisis high of 3.5%, (excluding bonuses), in the three months to December before falling marginally to 3.4% more recently. Growth in employment fell to only 32,000 in the three months to April, well below the 2018 average, while the unemployment rate remained at 3.8%, its lowest rate since 1975. Correspondingly, the total level of vacancies has risen to new highs. As for **CPI inflation** itself, this rose slightly to 2.1% in April before falling back again to 2.0% in May, and is likely to remain around this level over the next two years. If there was a no deal Brexit though, it could rise towards 4%, primarily as a result of imported inflation on the back of a weakening pound. The rise in wage inflation and fall in CPI inflation is good news for **consumers** as their spending power is improving in this scenario as the difference between the two figures is now around 1.3%, i.e. a real terms increase. Given the UK economy is very much services sector driven, an increase in household spending power is likely to feed through into providing some support to the overall rate of economic growth in the coming months.

**Brexit.** The aim for the new Government is for Brexit to happen by, or on, 31 October, even if there is no deal, however, it is unclear if there will be majority support in the Commons for any option. If there was a stalemate in the Commons, then that would increase the chances of a general election in 2019; this could result in a potential loosening of monetary policy and therefore medium to longer dated gilt yields could rise on the expectation of a weak pound and concerns around inflation picking up.

**USA.** President Trump's massive easing of fiscal policy in 2018 fuelled a (temporary) boost in consumption in 2018 which generated an upturn in the rate of growth to 2.9% for 2018, just below his target of 3%. Growth in quarter 1 of 2019 was a strong 3.1% but current expectations are for this to weaken considerably in quarter 2. The strong growth in employment numbers during 2018 has faded more recently, indicating that the economy is cooling, while inflationary pressures are also weakening. After the Fed increased rates by 0.25% in December to between 2.25% and 2.50%, market expectations have swung to now expecting the Fed to cut rates by 1.0% - 1.25% in total to counter the expected downturn in growth. Financial markets have priced in a first cut of 0.25% for July.

**EUROZONE.** The annual rate of growth for 2018 was 1.8% but is expected to fall to possibly around half that rate in 2019. The European Central Bank (ECB) ended its programme of quantitative easing purchases of debt in December 2018, which meant

that the central banks in the US, UK and EU had all ended the phase of post financial crisis expansion of liquidity supporting world financial markets by purchases of debt. However, the downturn in growth in the second half of 2018 and into 2019, together with inflation falling well under the upper limit of its target range of 0 to 2%, (but it aims to keep it near to 2%), has prompted the ECB to take new measures to stimulate growth. At its March meeting it said that it expected to leave interest rates at their present levels “at least through the end of 2019”, but that was of little help to boosting growth in the near term. Consequently, it announced a third round of TLTROs (targeted longer-term refinancing operations); this provides banks with cheap borrowing every three months from September 2019 until March 2021 which means that, although they will have only a two-year maturity, the Bank is making funds available until 2023, two years later than under its previous policy. As with the last round, the new TLTROs will include an incentive to encourage bank lending, and they will be capped at 30% of a bank’s eligible loans. However, the downturn now appears to be gathering momentum so market expectations have moved on to expecting possibly a small increase in the deposit rate from -0.4% to -0.5% and a resumption of quantitative easing, but possibly more focused on purchases of corporate debt than government debt.

**CHINA.** Economic growth has been weakening over successive years, despite repeated rounds of central bank stimulus; medium term risks are increasing. Major progress still needs to be made to eliminate excess industrial capacity and the stock of unsold property, and to address the level of non-performing loans in the banking and credit systems.

**JAPAN** - has been struggling to stimulate consistent significant GDP growth and to get inflation up to its target of 2%, despite huge monetary and fiscal stimulus. It is also making little progress on fundamental reform of the economy.

**WORLD GROWTH.** The trade war between the US and China on tariffs is a major concern not only to financial markets and China itself, but also for world growth, as any downturn in China will spill over into impacting countries supplying raw materials to China. Concerns are focused on the synchronised general weakening of growth in the major economies of the world compounded by fears that there could even be a recession looming up in the US, though this is probably overblown. These concerns have resulted in government bond yields in the developed world falling significantly during 2019, which has then caused equity prices to rise. If there were a major worldwide downturn in growth, central banks in most of the major economies will have limited ammunition available, in terms of monetary policy measures, when rates are already very low in most countries, (apart from the US), and there are concerns about how much distortion of financial markets has already occurred with the current levels of quantitative easing purchases of debt by central banks.

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