BASE RATE



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Bank of England Base Rate remains at 4.75% ce: Bank of England, December 2024)

Over the last year or so, Mortgage Rates have broadly improved. And, more recently, we've seen reductions in the **Base Rate**, albeit it stayed at the same level (4.75%) at the Bank of England's meeting in December 2024. The next couple of meetings will be on 6 February, and 20 March 2025.

Elsewhere, other factors have come together to help create a more encouraging environment.

Annual inflation currently sits at 2.5%. Whilst this figure is up from 1.7%, a few months back, it's still much lower than the sizeable 11.1% back in October 2022. Also, UK house prices continue to increase (up annually by 4.7%).

(Sources: Office for National Statistics, CPI, 15 January 2025; Nationwide, House Price Index, December 2024)

Lender Rates

In recent times, we've had yo-yo period with regard to rates on offer And whilst the 'ave

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a 2-, or 5-year deal currently start with a '5', better rates that begin with a low '4' may be on offer. This is generally applicable to loans of 60%, or less, than the value of the property.

Whatever your situation, it's likely that the comparative rate for those coming off 2-, and 5-year deals, will result in a bit of a price shock, although not as bad as it would have been a number of months back. (Source: moneyfactscompare.co.uk, January 2025)

Individ

To some extent the fluctuating rates are due to the impact of Swap Rates, which the pricing of

ptions

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Contact Russell Lewis at BlueStone Publishing Ltd

Predictions for 2025

Base Rate - in December 2024, the governor of the Bank of England indicated that, contingent upon economic conditions, they may reduce interest rates by around one percentage point over the course of 2025. Possibly via four quarter-point reductions.

Uplift in mortgage lending - according to UK Finance, there may be an 11% annual growth in gross mortgage lending in 2025, echoing the improving climate.

House prices - Nationwide is predicting a 2-4% annual growth in 2025, with Halifax <u>PDF</u> version <u>Email Template</u> set-up to work with PDF recting a 0-3% rise.



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up

MARKET FACTS

INFLATION

Back in October 2022 annual inflation stood at a recent high of 11.1%. The latest annual CPI inflation figure to December 2024 is 2.5% - and is partly influenced by the increase in transport costs. However, it's down from the 2.6% in the 12 months to November 2024. And, interestingly, Core CPI (which excludes energy, food, alcohol and tobacco), stands at an annual 3.2%, and is less than the annual 3.5% increase in November. This metric tends to have a greater influence on the Bank of England's Base Rate decision-making.

PROPERTY PRICES

In December 2024, the average annual UK property price rose by 4.7% (to around £269,500) - the highest recorded value since the Summer of 2022.

And if you want to get a feel for house

price sales in your own can check out the gov.uk/search & Wales) scotlis.ros.gov. finance-ni.gov.uk

MORTGAGE RATES

Residential:

- 2-year fixed rate deal
- Average rate, 1 January 2025 = 5.48%
- 5-year fixed rate deal
- Average rate, 1 January 2025 = 5.25%
- Standard Variable Rate (SVR)
- Average rate, 1 January 2025 = 7.81%

Buy-to-Let:

2-year fixed rate deal

- Average rate, 1 January 2025 = 5.34%
- 5-year fixed rate deal

- Average rate, 1 January 2025 = 5.45% (Source: moneyfactscompare.co.uk, January 2025)

Your Future Plans.... (contd)



Continued from page 1

Of course, the UK is not immune to geopolitical events throughout the world, and these could, ultimately, result in a knock-on effect to mortgage rates.

And let's not forget the impact of the Budget...

April 2025 will see the introduction of most of the Budget initiatives, which were

deliver an extra £70bn of

Inheritance Tax

The current thresholds will remain as is, but will be frozen at that level for a further two years, until 2030, drawing more into the net. ■ Income Tax

This is untouched, but the thresholds at the moment are frozen until 2028, creating a fiscal drag (as it generates a bigger tax take as incomes rise). But from 2028/29, the thresholds will then rise in line with inflation. (Sources: HM Treasury, October 2024; Office for Budget Responsibility, Economic & Fiscal outlook, October 2024)

> situation, we'd fully assess poptions on offer. And rom the fact that we ay-in day-out, plus and expertise to eets your needs.

as landlords), the 3% surcharge they already faced was lifted to 5%, with immediate effect.

Also, after a period of reduced Stamp Duty charges, all purchases will return to the normal rates from 1 April 2025.

Stamp Duty is applicable to England and Northern Ireland.

Capital Gains Tax (CGT)

The sale of shares and assets will now face the same higher CGT bands as those applicable to additional homes. On 30 October 2024 they increased from 10% to 18% for basic rate taxpayers, and 20% to 24% for those on a higher rate.

The Financial Conduct Authority does not regulate taxation advice.

HM Revenue & Customs practice and the law relating to taxation are complex and subject to individual circumstances and changes which cannot be foreseen.

You may have to pay an early repayment charge to your existing lender if you remortgage.

Your property may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage.

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This year, 1,800,000 fixed-rate mortgage deals will come to

an end. (Source: UK Finance, Household Finance Review, Q2 2024, released September 2024)

That 1.8m figure equates to over 20% of all outstanding residential mortgages; so, 2025 is likely to be quite busy. (Source: UK Finance, June 2024 data)

Additionally, there are about 242,500 buy-to-let loans that will also come to the end of their deal period in 2025.

Furthermore, there are still many that would love to make that jump from renting to taking their first step on the propertyowning ladder.

Where we car

With over 6,50 ucts out ther and criteria t 2025, almost 9

are expected to turn to mortgage advisers, such as us. (Sources: moneyfactscompare.co.uk, January 2025; IMLA report, December 2024)

Existing mortgage-borrowing clients:

We would be in touch, ahead of your deal rate coming to an end, to discuss your future borrowing requirements, and would then set out the options for you.

Conversely, if you're looking to purchase a new property, then do get in touch to see how that plays out with regard to your current borrowing arrangement.

Credit Rating

A credit score is designed to try to predict your future behaviour. You can check your rating at agencies such as Experian, Equifax, and TransUnion. Or take a look at Checkmyfile, which generally brings together your results across most rating agencies:

Tel: 0800 086 9360 www.checkmyfile.com

Securing a deal:

A further benefit of dealing with us, rather than going direct to a bank, for example, is that once you take up a deal rate (generally 4-6 months ahead of the existing one coming to an end), we can still switch it to a better rate (on a comparable plan) from the chosen lender. This option is there up until near the commencement of your new mortgage deal, which means you can lock-in a deal early, and benefit should rates improve. If you went direct to the lender, then it is unlikely they'd tell you that a better deal could be had.

Doing the leqwork for you:

And, we can hold your hand throughout the application process, and liaise with others such as the lender, estate agents, solicitors, and surveyors.

Please do get in touch if you'd like to have a chat about your borrowing requirements.

> r property may be repossessed ot keep up repayments on

> > ayouts

v reason for talking

97.4% of all claims were paid out in. equating to a record £20.1m per day!

Life Cover

- 99.4% of all Life claims were paid out.
- Average payout of £80,403 (term), £5,760 (whole of life).

Critical Illness

- 90.5% of all claims were paid out.
- Average payout of £68,354.

Income Protection

■ 81.3% of all claims were paid out.

■ Average payout of £22,270.

(Source: Association of British Insurers, 2023 data, September 2024 release)

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various types of Protection

Insurance that are on offer. Some are designed to ensure your income stream can be maintained in the event of an illness or injury, and others may deliver a payout for your family, should the unthinkable occur.

Of course, with numerous calls for the money in your pocket, we fully understand that some of you may view protection cover as something:

- that's simply 'not for me'.
- that's 'too expensive'.
- where 'I don't believe the insurer will

pay out in the event of a claim'.

We'd be keen to discuss the first two points, as you may be pleasantly surprised at the costs, and how protection cover could bring 'peace of mind'. With regard to the last point, as the box item shows, almost 98% of claims are actually paid out.

PROTECTION

For the government to achieve its spending objectives, the **Budget** aimed to raise an extra £70bn, annually. Over half of this amount will be generated by increased taxation, with most measures being applicable from April 2025.

l he Autui

According to the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), the UK economy will grow by 2% in 2025. And, it forecasts that inflation, will be slightly higher than previously thought, at 2.6% in 2025. Both aspects would, undoubtedly, be affected by the increased level of government spending.

Main elements of the extra £36bn tax hit

Employers NI contribution	= + £24.5bn	
Capital Taxes, such as CGT, IHT & Stamp Duty	= + £5.6bn	
HMRC compliance activity	= + £4.0bn	
VAT charges on private school fees	= + £1.6bn	
(Source: Office for Budget Responsibility, Economic ざ Fiscal outlook, October 2024)		

Employers National Insurant

This is, undoubtedly, th The NI contribution above £5,000, ag On average, this according to the OL

Although, for smalle. rise in the Employment Allow. the $f_{100,000}$ threshold for eligibility.

emains with BlueStone Publishing Ltd 2025. Under no circumstat copy and/or layout be used in any other communications activity without Prior permission from BlueStone Publishing. Stamp Duty (for England & N. Ireland)

Landlords, and those buying an additional home, were already facing a 3% tax surcharge on their Stamp Duty bill. This has now risen, with immediate effect, to 5%.

Also, there's further bad news, as there was no announcement about extending the discounted Stamp Duty set-up that's been in place since 2022. The normal rates will be applied from 1 April 2025.

This will mean that from April, the nil rate threshold for those buying their primary property will reduce from £250,000 to £125,000. And for First-Time Buyers, it'll come down from £425,000 to £300,000.

£3bn to help boost housing

On the spending front - £3bn of additional support will be provided for SMEs and the Build to Rent sector, in the form of housing guarantee schemes, to support the private housing market.

It was thought that this measure might be extended for a year or so beyond 2028. Instead, from the 2028/2029 tax year, the chancellor

hat the thresholds will then rise in line with inflation. ADDITIONAL PAGE OPTION, IF WANTED

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re any tax is claimed.

A measure that will

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Although, the chancellor did also announce that from 2027, inherited pensions will also be brought into the IHT calculation.

Fuel Duty

The 5p cut in fuel duty for petrol and diesel, brought in by the Conservatives (due to end in April 2025), will be kept for another year.

VAT on Private School fees

This was already out there, and was confirmed by the chancellor, with it coming into effect from January 2025.

Non-Dom regime to be scrapped

From April 2025 this will be replaced with a new residence-based scheme. Time will tell if this has an impact on the property-buying activity of the Non-Doms. (Sources: HM Treasury, October 2024)

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HM Revenue & Customs practice and the law relating to taxation are complex and subject to individual circumstances



Capital Gains Tax (CGT)

The possibility of increasing taxes on the capital growth of an additional property, when sold, didn't materialise. But, the CGT on selling shares/assets immediately rose to the same level as an additional property sale. That's a shift from 10% to 18% for basic rate taxpayers, and up from 20% to 24% for those on the higher rate.

Income Tax

The freezing (since 2022) of Income Tax thresholds is seen as a stealth tax, as more people are drawn into paying tax, or paying at a

higher rate, as their incomes rise.

3UDGET

FIRST STEPS

In the past, First-Time Buyer mortgage loans generally equated to three to four times your salary. Nowadays, we're seeing deals where the loan to income amount has risen to 5.5, or even 6 times!

This is one of many examples where there is a **desire by the** lenders to help First-Time Buyers.

Elsewhere, the government's enthusiasm to help them out, covers schemes like 'Freedom to Buy', and also, they are committed to building more homes to meet the demand (1.5m over the next 5 years).

Additionally, the government's desire to view Budget revenue source, may result in more prop the market, as some within that sector depart

Finally, let's factor in possible financial grandparents). Or, consider the pragmatic a first-time buyers, where two (or more) peopl to obtain their first home.

Providing a deposit This is one of the biggest stumbling blocks. In 202, logo colours - for both printed stand the range of mortgage options available deposit was £53,414, equating to around 18.5% of the put

price. (Source: Halifax, First-Time Buyer report, January 2024)

This percentage deposit will obviously open up the buyer to better rates than those who are looking at deals at around a 5% deposit (or less). Although, for some, the lower deposit option may be more appealing, as it'll get them onto the property ladder sooner.

The lower Stamp Duty cost is going...

First-Time Buyers (in England and Northern Ireland) benefit from

STAMP DUT

Reduced rate bands applicable to a First-Time Buyer (FTB) property purchased in England and Northern Ireland.

UP TO 31 MARCH 202	<u>5</u>
Up to £425,000	0%
Portion from	
\$425 001 to \$625 000	E %

If the property price is over

£625,000, the FTB reverts to the normal rates.

(Source: HM Treasury, October 2024)

HM Revenue & Customs practice and the law relating to taxation are complex and subject to individual circumstances and changes which cannot be foreseen.



lower Stamp Duty charges. However, the better tax rates currently in place will end on 31 March 2025.

From 1 April 2025 it will revert back to the previous higher is would, for example, mean a £425,000 First-Time

THREE story choices for page 4: This is **option 1** 1. First-Time Buyer 2. Buy-to-Let Landlord 3. Self-Employed

is to take a 5 or 6 page pdf (selecting from the three story choices here)

generate no Stamp Duty tax up to 31 March d be £6,250.

le, a $f_{,625,000}$ purchase would see the tax £21,250.

o endeavour to complete before April.

ource: Moneybox, Voice of FTBs survey, September 2024)

And that's where we come in. We can assist with your application, factor in any financial support from the family, and assess where you stand on meeting the lender's affordability criteria - which varies across the board.

We'd also consider the various schemes on offer from the government, and balance that against the alternatives out there in the general marketplace.

If this is of interest, then please get in touch to find out more.

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5%

FROM 1 APRIL 2025 Up to £300,000

Portion from

the normal rates.

£300,001 to £500,000

If the property price is over

£500,000, the FTB reverts to

IT's i

It's hard to identify the positives for Landlords, as they're hit again in the Budget, and elsewhere. But, as before, they have proved to be an extremely resilient group of individuals.

In recent years, this sector has faced tax rises, increased average cost of £8,074 each. (Source: Rightmore October 2024) regulations, and higher mortgage rates. And now we'

the Autumn Budget, along with other recent initiative

Renters' Rights Bill

This is currently going through parliament, witl those concerned about the implications of the

It encompasses elements such as ending evictions, and allowing tenants to keep pets, insurance to cover potential damages. Elsewhe Law to, understandably, tackle damp and mould in

You can choose from THREE story choices for page 4: This is **option 2** 1. First-Time Buyer 2. Buv-to-Let Landlord

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is still sizeable

rage monthly rent was $f_{1,307}$ (up 2.2%) rn was Greater London at $f_{2,151}$, with out at £,1,110. ovember 2024)

fixed rate deal, or simply want to have up service cing options, then please do get in touch.

EPC targets by 2030

The government also expects landlords to improve the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings of their rental properties to a C rating, or above, by 2030. Whilst Portfolio landlords are more likely to have made the improvements, there are still about 2.9m properties that would need to be upgraded, at an



Yet again, Landlords are viewed as a relatively easy target, and one where little allowance is made.

Not only was no extension put in place for the existing set of Stamp Duty rates (they end on 31 March 2025), but the 3% surcharge faced by those purchasing an additional home (that isn't their primary residence), was replaced by a 5% one.

On average, this may add in the realms of £4-8,000 to the purchase cost. And this measure has been implemented immediately, and not from April next year.

So, aside from the extra costs applicable to an ongoing property purchase, it may also have implications for the property-buying chain.

On the upside, the feared increase in Capital Gains Tax for the sale of an additional home didn't materialise, and the rate remains at 18% for normal rate taxpayers, and 24% for higher rate. (Source: HM Treasury, October 2024)

guarantee that it will be possible to arrange continuous letting of the property, nor that the rental income will be sufficient to meet the costs of the mortgage.

The value of your Buy-to-Let property and income from it can go down as well as up. You may also require advice on the legal and tax issues.

The Financial Conduct Authority does not regulate legal and taxation advice, and most Buy-to-Let mortgages.

HM Revenue & Customs practice and the law relating to taxation are complex and subject to individual circumstances and changes which cannot be foreseen.



We cover mortgages, insurance and protection products along with a number of other financial areas, so do contact us if you'd like to discuss your financial needs: Tel: ???? ?????? Email: ?????@????????? Web: ????????????

There can be numerous benefits from being **Self-Employed,** and if things are going well, you'll generally see immediate financial returns. However, historically, there was often an issue

when applying for a mortgage.

Working for **MOURSE**

YOURSELF

On the positive side, a number of lenders appear to the more accepting these days of the variable incomposition of a self-employed worker, and also those salarited the transition of a sizeable part of their income street for page 4: The bonuses, commission, or overtime.

Unfortunately, this more supportive ap as understood as it could be by many a employed - who broadly equate to a sizeal employment.

(Source: Office for National Statistics, Labour market overview, D. Plus, we offer a corporate colour-up service de most suitable outcome for them.

And this is even more pronounced if we look

not yet on the property buying ladder. First-Time Buy and poself-employed are still twice as likely to have been rejected for a mortgage (39% compared with the national average of 20%). It's

Income Protection

■ This type of insurance cover is designed to pay out a monthly income, if you are unable to work due to an accident or illness. Yet many self-employed workers mistakenly believe that they'll never qualify for this - which is generally not the case.

■ And, of course, the self-employed worker is likely to be more financially exposed should they not be earning, and won't have a traditional safety net, such as sick pay.

■ Also, if you operate through a limited company, then the option exists for the company to pay the monthly premiums.

■ There are a multitude of options to consider, if taking out this type of policy - such as: long-term vs. short-term plans; or when the payments kick in after claiming for an accident or illness. All the numerous options will impact on both what you pay out each month, and the amount you could be claiming, if successful.

As with all insurance policies, terms, conditions and exclusions will apply.

surprise that four out of 10 First-Time Buyers opted to give

tober 2024 research)

You can choose from THREE story choices for page 4: This is option 3

1. First-Time Buyer 2. Buy-to-Let Landlord 3. Self-Employed

Alternatively, an increasingly popular option is to take a 5 or 6 page pdf (selecting from the three story choices here) tot always need to be the case, and that's **te professional advice.** We know the need to jump through, and how to best thether a first-time buyer, or not). And,

to match the issue to your own at have different criteria for assessing and logo colours - for both printed and pdf copies ortgage. Some will base it on the latest year's income, rejected for a wome others may opt for seeing the last two or three years.

Also, lenders may (if you're a limited company) use salary and dividends, or perhaps salary and a share of net profits, or maybe a share of gross profits.

Put simply, it's a minefield, and one where a self-employed worker really should obtain advice. By taking this approach for their mortgage needs, they can hopefully avoid exiting the selfemployed sector, and continue to fully focus on what they do best - delivering on their own business offering.

Please get in touch if you'd like to hear more.



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