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To:	Mr Carsten PILLATH, Director General, Council of the European Union
Subject:	United Kingdom: Report on Effective Action, as laid down in Article 3(4a) of Council Regulation (EC) 1467/97 on action taken by United Kingdom in response to the Council's recommendation under Article 126(7) TFEU.

Delegations will find attached the first part of the addendum to the Report on Effective Action, as laid down in Article 3(4a) of Council Regulation (EC) 1467/97 on action taken by United Kingdom in response to the Council's recommendation under Article 126(7) TFEU.

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Office for
Budget
Responsibility

Economic and fiscal outlook

July 2015

Cm 9088

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Office for Budget Responsibility: Economic and fiscal outlook

Presented to Parliament by
the Economic Secretary to the Treasury by
Command of Her Majesty

July 2015

Cm 9088

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Contents

Foreword 1

Chapter 1 Executive summary

Overview 5

Economic developments since our previous forecast 8

The economic outlook 8

The fiscal outlook 11

Performance against the fiscal targets.................................. 19

Chapter 2 Developments since the last forecast

Introduction 23

Economic developments 23

Fiscal data developments.. 26

Developments in outside forecasts.. 27

Chapter 3 Economic outlook

Introduction 29

Potential output and the output gap...................................... 29

Key economy forecast assumptions....................................... 37

Prospects for real GDP growth 45

Prospects for inflation 50

Prospects for nominal GDP growth....................................... 54

Prospects for individual sectors of the economy 55

Risks and uncertainties.. 72

Comparison with external forecasters 73

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Chapter 4 Fiscal outlook

Introduction 79
Economic determinants of the fiscal forecast 80
Policy announcements, risks and classification changes 84
Public sector receipts 89
Public sector expenditure 108
Loans and other financial transactions 138
The key fiscal aggregates 149
Risks and uncertainties 156
International comparisons 157

Chapter 5 Performance against the Government's fiscal targets

Introduction 159
The Government's fiscal targets 159
The implications of our central forecast 160
Recognising uncertainty 173

Annex A Summer Budget 2015 policy measures

Overview 183
Uncertainty 184
HMRC operational measures 194
Interactions 196
Departmental spending 197
Indirect effects on the economy 198

Annex B The National Living Wage

Introduction 199
Estimating the effects on our central economic forecast 199
Uncertainties and sensitivity analysis 205
Implications for our fiscal forecast 207

Index of charts and tables 211

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Foreword

The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) was established in 2010 to provide independent and authoritative analysis of the UK's public finances.

In this *Economic and fiscal outlook* (*EFO*) we set out forecasts to 2020-21. We also assess whether the Government is on course to meet the medium-term fiscal objectives that it has set itself, including the proposed new targets that it has set out in this Budget. The forecasts presented in this document represent the collective view of the three independent members of the OBR's Budget Responsibility Committee (BRC). We take full responsibility for the judgements that underpin them and for the conclusions we have reached.

We have, of course, been hugely supported in this by the staff of the OBR. We are enormously grateful for the hard work, expertise and professionalism that they have brought to the task. Given the highly disaggregated nature of the fiscal forecasts we produce, we have also drawn heavily on the work and expertise of officials across government, including in HM Revenue and Customs, the Department for Work and Pensions, HM Treasury, the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, the Department of Energy and Climate Change, the Oil and Gas Authority, the Office for National Statistics, the UK Debt Management Office, the Scottish Government and Scottish Fiscal Commission, the Welsh Government, Transport for London and the various public sector pension schemes. We are very grateful for their time and patience. We have also had useful exchanges with staff at the Bank of England regarding their latest forecast, for which we are very grateful.

The forecast process for this *EFO* has been as follows:

- In May, the Treasury requested that we finalise the Summer Budget 2015 forecast on a 'pre-scorecard' basis (i.e. before incorporating the effect of new policy announcements that are listed in the Treasury's 'scorecard' table of policy decisions) around two weeks ahead of the Budget in order to provide the Chancellor with a stable base for his final policy decisions.

- We began the forecast process with the preparation by OBR staff of a revised economic forecast, drawing on economic data released since the last published forecast in March 2015 and with our preliminary judgements on the outlook for the economy.

- Using the economic determinants from this forecast (such as the components of nominal income and spending, plus inflation and unemployment), we then commissioned new forecasts from the relevant government departments for the various tax and spending streams that in aggregate determine the state of the public finances. We discussed these in detail with the officials producing them, which allowed us to investigate proposed changes in forecasting methodology and to assess the significance of recent tax and spending outturns. In many cases, the BRC requested changes to methodology and/or the interpretation of recent data.

- We sent our first economic and fiscal forecast (including a provisional judgement on progress towards meeting the fiscal targets) on 4 June. We provided the Chancellor with these early forecasts in order to inform his policy choices for the Budget.

- As the forecasting process continued, we identified the key judgements that we would have to make in order to generate our full economic forecast. Where we thought it would be helpful, we commissioned analysis from the relevant experts in the Treasury to help inform our views. The BRC then agreed the key judgements, allowing the production by OBR staff of a second full economic forecast.

- This provided the basis for a further round of fiscal forecasts. Discussion of these forecasts with HMRC, DWP and the other departments gave us the opportunity to follow up the various requests for further analysis, methodological changes and alternative judgements that we made during the previous round. We provided the second round economic and fiscal forecast to the Chancellor on 17 June.

- We then produced a third economy and fiscal forecast, which allowed us to take on latest data and to ensure that our judgements on the fiscal forecast had been incorporated. We finalised this forecast and sent it to the Chancellor on 25 June, and we met with him and Treasury officials to discuss it on 29 June.

- Meanwhile, we were also scrutinising the costing of tax and spending measures that were being considered for announcement at the Budget. The BRC requested a number of changes to the draft costings prepared by HMRC, DWP and other departments. As in March, the policy costings scrutiny process was particularly difficult for this Budget as we were not given details of costings for a large proportion of significant policy measures until just before our deadlines. We have endorsed all but one of the tax and annually managed expenditure costings in the table as reasonable and central estimates of the measures themselves. We were unable to certify one element of the welfare savings package as reasonable and central in the time available, but we have included the Treasury's estimate of its impact in our forecast and will return to the costing at our next forecast. We have continued our fuller discussion and calibration of the uncertainties that surround these policy costings, which is presented in Annex A of this *EFO* and in our annex to the Treasury's *Summer Budget 2015 policy costings document*.

- At the same time as we were scrutinising scorecard policy measures under consideration, the Treasury presented its own analysis of the possible impact on the economy of the introduction of a Living Wage Premium for people aged 25 and over. The BRC requested further analysis in a number of areas, before reaching final judgements that were included in our final economy forecast. These judgements are set out in Annex B of this *EFO*.

- During the week before publication we produced our final forecast, incorporating the final package of policy measures. We were provided with final details of most major policy decisions with a potential impact on the economy forecast – including assumed departmental spending figures for 2016-17 onwards and the parameters of the Living Wage Premium – on 30 June. These, along with the latest Quarterly National Accounts release from the ONS, were

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incorporated into our final economy forecast. The Government informed us of changes to some policies that were relevant to our economy forecast after the deadline for including them in our final forecast. Incorporating the final policies would not have made a material difference to that forecast.

- At the Treasury's written request, and in line with pre-release access arrangements for data releases from the ONS, we provided the Chancellor with a near-final draft of the *EFO* on 3 July. This allowed the Treasury to prepare the Chancellor's statement and documentation. We also provided a full and final copy 24 hours in advance of publication.

During the forecasting period, the BRC held around 60 scrutiny and challenge meetings with officials from other departments, in addition to numerous further meetings at staff level. We have been provided with all the information and analysis that we requested. We have come under no pressure from Ministers, advisers or officials to change any of our conclusions as the forecast has progressed. A full log of our substantive contact with Ministers, their offices and special advisers can be found on our website.

We would be pleased to receive feedback on any aspect of our analysis or the presentation of the analysis. This can be sent to OBRfeedback@obr.gsi.gov.uk.

Robert Chote Sir Stephen Nickell Graham Parker CBE

The Budget Responsibility Committee

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Economic and fiscal outlook 4

1 Executive summary

Overview

1.1 The new Government has used its first Budget to loosen significantly the impending squeeze on public services spending that had been pencilled in by the Coalition in March. This is being financed by welfare cuts, net tax increases and three years of higher government borrowing. The Government has delayed the expected return to a budget surplus by a year to 2019-20, but is then aiming for a slightly bigger surplus in the medium term.

1.2 The Government's provisional spending assumptions imply that Resource Departmental Expenditure Limits (RDEL) – which cover day-to-day central government spending on public services, grants and administration – would be £83.3 billion higher in total over the current Parliament than the Coalition suggested in March. The Government has also announced tax cuts costing £24.6 billion over the Parliament, primarily cutting corporation tax rates, raising the income tax personal allowance and extending inheritance tax relief for main residences.

1.3 These 'giveaways' are being financed from five main sources:

- tax increases raise £47.2 billion over the Parliament, including increases in dividend taxation, insurance premium tax and vehicle excise duty, plus cuts in pensions tax relief, earlier corporation tax payments, and anti-avoidance and evasion measures;
- welfare cuts raise £34.9 billion. These include a four-year freeze in the uprating of most working-age benefits, cuts in the generosity of tax credits and reduced work allowances in universal credit. The Government will also force local authorities and housing associations to cut rents, thereby reducing the cost of housing benefit;
- other spending decisions raise £8.1 billion. These include reductions in departmental capital spending and a cut in funding for the BBC reaching £745 million in 2020-21;
- these various tax and spending decisions have indirect effects that raise a further £14.2 billion. These include the pension contributions that would be paid by additional public sector workers, and higher income tax and NICs receipts; and
- the Budget decisions also imply £3.5 billion of extra borrowing over the Parliament, on top of the £14.6 billion increase implied by our pre-measures forecast. This includes £16.7 billion of additional borrowing between 2016-17 and 2018-19, to help avoid the sharpest cuts in public services spending. Thereafter the Government uses some of the welfare cuts and tax increases to aim for bigger budget surpluses.

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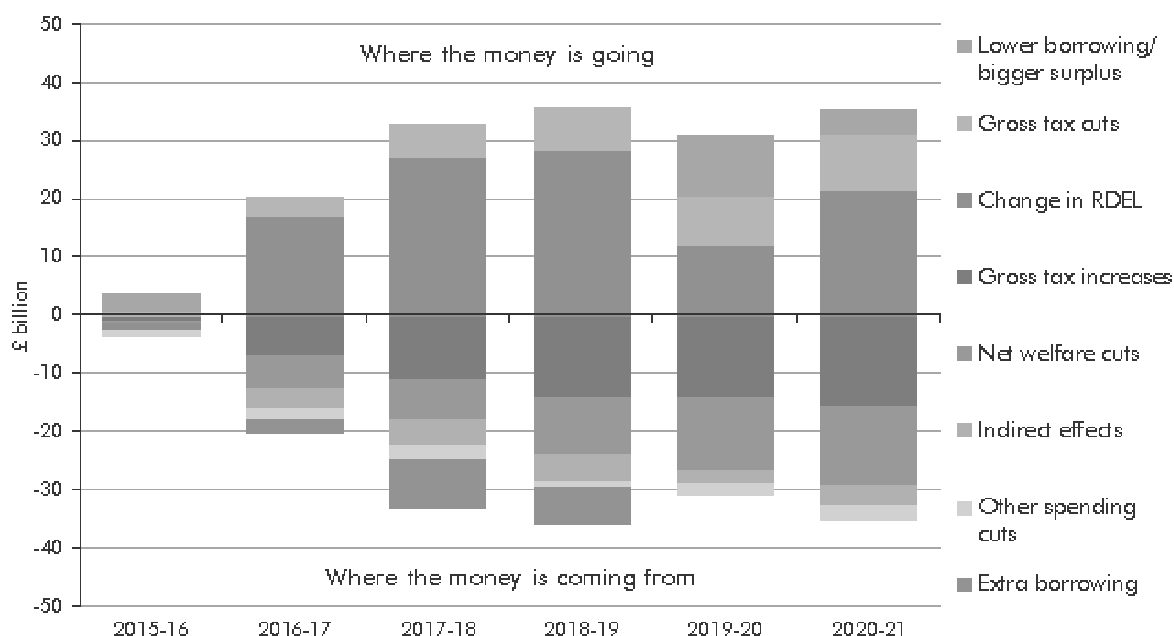
1.4 On the basis of these provisional plans, the forthcoming Spending Review would be a lot less challenging than it appeared in March. The Government would have to identify further real cuts in public services spending rising to a peak of £17.9 billion in 2019-20, rather than £41.9 billion in 2018-19. Thereafter spending is assumed to rise again in real terms. Public services spending would fall by an average of 1.5 per cent a year in real terms over this Parliament as a whole, slightly less than the 1.6 per cent a year cuts over the last.

1.5 We now forecast that public sector net borrowing will total £69.5 billion this year, down £5.8 billion since March thanks to stronger-than-expected revenues, the spending cuts announced in June, the rise in insurance premium tax and a delay to the introduction of tax-free childcare. The deficit then declines more slowly than in March, moving into surplus by £10.0 billion in 2019-20, increasing to £11.6 billion in the following year.

1.6 Chart 1.1 summarises the impact of the Budget policy decisions across the forecast. Modest spending cuts and tax increases reduce borrowing a little this year. Over the following three years the welfare cuts and tax increases mount steadily, but they are not large enough to pay for the higher public services spending and tax cuts – hence the need for more borrowing to fill the gap. In the final two years the welfare cuts, tax increases and indirect effects more than pay for the tax cuts and (smaller) additions to public services spending – increasing the then budget surplus. In 2020-21, the Budget raises £13.3 billion from welfare cuts, £15.9 billion from tax increases and £6.1 billion from lower departmental capital spending, other measures and indirect effects. This pays for £21.6 billion more public services spending, £9.4 billion of tax cuts and a £4.3 billion bigger budget surplus.

Chart 1.1: The impact of Budget policy decisions over the forecast



Source: OBR

1.7 The Chancellor said in his March Budget speech that he wanted to raise £12 billion from welfare cuts and £5 billion from anti-avoidance and evasion measures by 2017-18. As defined in the Treasury's scorecard of policy measures, this Budget raises £7.0 billion from welfare cuts and £2.4 billion from 'avoidance and tax planning, evasion and compliance, and imbalances in the tax system'. These rise to £12.1 billion and £5.0 billion in 2019-20.

1.8 The Budget policy measures take place against the backdrop of an underlying economic and fiscal forecast that has changed relatively little since our last forecast in March. We have not adjusted our economy forecast for the potentially disruptive events in Greece that were still unfolding when we closed the pre-measures forecast on 25 June.

1.9 In terms of our economy forecast, since March:

- we have revised GDP growth in 2015 down to 2.4 per cent, reflecting the weaker-than-expected start to the year and a small drag from the in-year public spending cuts announced in June. Growth is unchanged since March in 2016, as we assume that the effect of the in-year cuts will be back-loaded, offsetting the slower cuts in 2016-17. Growth is then up a little in 2017, reflecting the slower pace of fiscal tightening;
- we have made small upward revisions to unemployment and downward revisions to hours worked in the final years of the forecast. That reflects higher labour costs from the introduction of the National Living Wage. We assume that this would raise the effective minimum wage for those aged 25 and above by over 13 per cent by 2020;
- the negative output gap is estimated to be slightly wider at the start of 2015, and is expected to close slightly later, in mid-2018; and
- our inflation forecast is little changed, remaining very low for the rest of the year, then rising in 2016 and returning slowly to the 2 per cent target over the forecast period.

1.10 Excluding the impact of policy measures, our forecasts for public sector net borrowing are up a little since March. Receipts are stronger, by an average of £3.9 billion a year across the forecast, but our forecast for annually managed expenditure is up by £6.3 billion a year. That includes the effect of higher interest rates on debt interest payments, higher spending associated with environmental levies and a methodological change that raised our net public sector pensions forecast.

1.11 In addition to the sales of Lloyds shares and mortgage assets held by UK Asset Resolution that were announced in March, the Government has now said that it will sell some of its RBS shares, its remaining stake in Royal Mail and its shares in King's Cross Central Partnership this year. Together with the initial tranche of sales of the pre-2012 student loan book, these asset sales should reduce public sector net debt by £32 billion in 2015-16. The Government has also announced plans to sell three-quarters of its shares in RBS over the Parliament, which we assume will raise around £6 billion a year from 2016-17 to 2019-20. Financial asset sales typically bring forward cash that would otherwise have been received later in mortgage repayments and dividends, so they only reduce net debt temporarily.

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1.12 The Government has proposed two new fiscal targets in this Budget: to achieve a surplus on public sector net borrowing in 2019-20 (and then every year in 'normal times') and for public sector net debt to fall as a share of GDP every year up to 2019-20. Our central forecast is consistent with it meeting those targets, as well as those still in force from the previous Coalition government, namely: the fiscal mandate (to balance the cyclically adjusted current budget in the third year of the forecast period) and the supplementary target (for debt to fall as a share of GDP in the fixed year of 2016-17).

Economic developments since our previous forecast

1.13 Since our previous forecast was published in March, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has revised up GDP growth in 2014 to 3.0 per cent, with stronger private consumption and private investment growth explaining most of the change. But the ONS has also estimated that GDP growth in the first quarter of 2015 was 0.4 per cent, below the 0.7 per cent we forecast in March. CPI inflation has moved in line with our March expectation, partly reflecting the relative stability of oil prices in recent months.

1.14 Global developments have been mixed since we finalised our March forecast. GDP in the US unexpectedly fell in the first quarter of 2015, although some of the weakness related to bad weather and to labour disputes disrupting port activity. In contrast, the euro area had been looking more positive as monetary policy has been eased, fiscal tightening has slowed, and recent falls in the euro and a lower oil price have supported the economy. But those tentative signs of improvement in activity must be weighed against the risks associated with the escalation of the Greek debt crisis in recent weeks.

The economic outlook

1.15 GDP growth was lower than we had expected in the first quarter of 2015, but we do not expect that weaker momentum to have persisted into the second quarter. CPI inflation and unemployment have moved much as we expected. Absent the effect of policy changes, our quarterly GDP forecast would have been unchanged through the rest of 2015. But there is particular uncertainty associated with the Greek debt crisis, which was still unfolding as we closed our forecast. We have not adjusted the forecast to reflect any instability in the euro area or spillover effects to the UK economy that might result, but the experience of 2011 and 2012 (let alone 2008 and 2009) shows that international shocks that undermine wider financial, business and consumer confidence can damage growth prospects.

1.16 With relatively little news affecting our economy forecast since March, the small changes we have made mostly result from the policy changes announced in the Budget:

- the pace and composition of fiscal consolidation has changed significantly. Bigger cuts in public spending in 2015-16 have reduced quarterly growth in late 2015 and early 2016. The significant slowing in the pace of spending cuts thereafter has raised quarterly growth through the rest of 2016. We have assumed that changes in later years will have only small effects on growth as the Bank of England will be able to factor them into its judgements when setting monetary policy;

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- our inflation forecast has been affected by a number of policy measures, the most significant of which are the increase in vehicle excise duty rates in 2017 and the decision to force social sector landlords to reduce rents by 1 per cent a year from 2016. As these are administered prices, we have assumed that the Bank of England will look through these effects when setting monetary policy; and

- we have made small adjustments to our assumptions for structural unemployment and potential output in light of the Government's decision to introduce a Living Wage Premium on top of the National Minimum Wage for people aged 25 and over. The response of firms and the impact on the labour market are subject to significant uncertainty. We have assumed that the increased labour costs will lead to a reduction in total hours worked of around 0.4 per cent – split equally between reduced average hours and around 60,000 fewer people in employment. But we have assumed a smaller reduction in total output of around 0.1 per cent, since the reduction in hours worked will be concentrated among people earning lower wages. Annex B describes how we have estimated these effects, and the uncertainties around them.

1.17 We forecast stable GDP growth over the forecast, averaging 2.4 per cent a year and dipping only slightly in 2016 when the pace of fiscal tightening is greatest. That reflects above-trend growth in the early years of the forecast, as the small negative output gap closes, then on-trend growth thereafter. The underlying trend rate of growth picks up slowly over the forecast, as productivity growth slowly returns to historically normal rates. Inflation is forecast to remain very low for the rest of 2015, to pick up quite sharply in 2016 and then to return slowly to the 2 per cent target. The small but persistent negative effect on inflation from the social rents policy is one reason for the protracted return to target, along with the lagged effect of recent sterling appreciation and falls in global commodity prices.

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Table 1.1: Overview of the economy forecast

	Percentage change on a year earlier, unless otherwise stated						
	Outturn	Forecast					
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Output at constant market prices							
Gross domestic product (GDP)	3.0	2.4	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4
GDP levels (2014=100)	100.0	102.4	104.8	107.4	109.9	112.5	115.2
Output gap	-1.0	-0.6	-0.4	-0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Expenditure components of GDP							
Household consumption	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.3	2.0
General government consumption	1.6	1.2	0.5	0.3	0.1	0.3	2.6
Business investment	8.0	6.0	7.2	6.9	6.6	6.5	4.7
General government investment	3.4	2.4	-0.1	0.9	2.4	2.3	2.0
Net trade[1]	-0.6	-0.5	-0.4	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2
Inflation							
CPI	1.5	0.1	1.1	1.6	1.8	1.9	2.0
Labour market							
Employment (millions)	30.7	31.2	31.5	31.6	31.7	31.9	32.1
Average earnings	2.6	2.2	3.6	3.9	3.9	4.1	4.4
LFS unemployment (% rate)	6.2	5.4	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.4
Claimant count (millions)	1.04	0.78	0.73	0.75	0.77	0.78	0.79
	Changes since March forecast						
Output at constant market prices							
Gross domestic product (GDP)	0.4	-0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	
GDP levels (2014=100)	0.0	-0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	
Output gap	0.0	-0.2	-0.2	-0.1	0.0	0.0	
Expenditure components of GDP							
Household consumption	0.5	0.5	-0.2	-0.1	0.0	0.1	
General government consumption	0.0	0.5	1.3	1.2	0.3	-1.2	
Business investment	1.2	0.9	-0.3	0.4	0.1	2.1	
General government investment	-3.9	0.0	-2.1	-0.7	0.9	-0.5	
Net trade	-0.1	-0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
Inflation							
CPI	0.0	-0.1	-0.1	0.0	-0.1	-0.1	
Labour market							
Employment (millions)	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	
Average earnings	0.4	-0.1	0.5	0.2	0.0	-0.3	
LFS unemployment (% rate)	0.0	0.1	-0.1	-0.1	0.0	0.0	
Claimant count (millions)	0.00	0.01	-0.01	-0.01	0.00	0.01	

[1] Contribution to GDP growth.

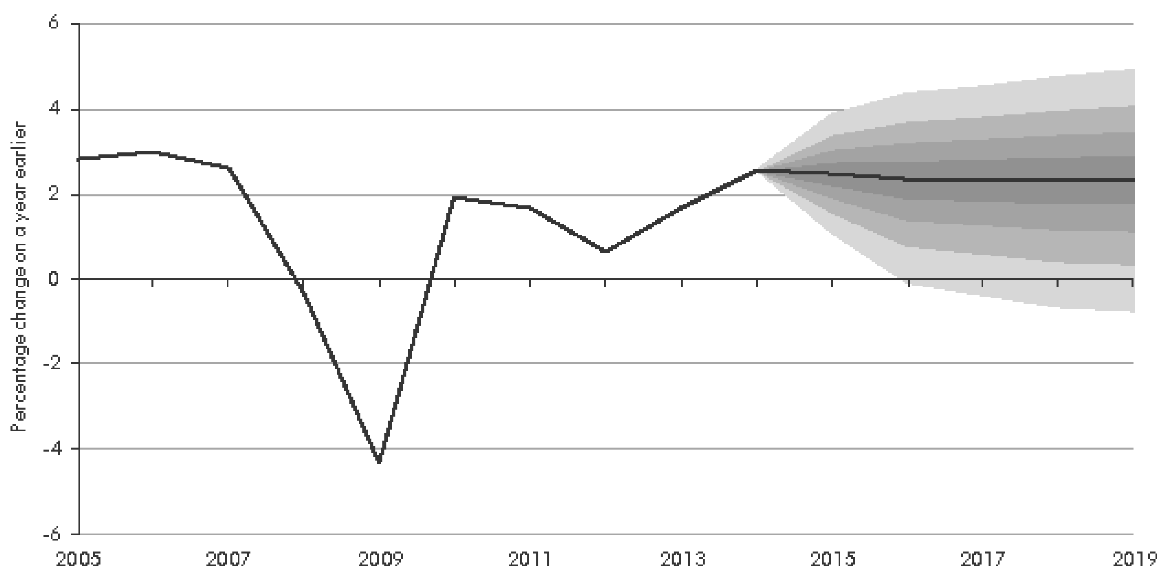
1.18 Employment growth has remained relatively strong in early 2015, while productivity has continued to disappoint. We forecast that employment will increase by 1.1 million over the next six years, more than explained by population growth. Our unemployment forecast is little changed in the early years of the forecast, but has been revised up fractionally later. That reflects a number of offsetting factors that have shifted our assumption about the structural unemployment rate (specifically, the non-accelerating inflation rate of unemployment or NAIRU). Before looking at the effect of policy changes announced in the Budget, we would have reduced the NAIRU slightly as unemployment was approaching our

previous estimate with only early signs of earnings growth picking up. But our estimate of the effect on employment of the Living Wage Premium has slightly more than offset that pre-measures judgement, lifting our medium-term estimate of the NAIRU to 5.4 per cent.

1.19 We have made relatively small adjustments to our residential property forecasts. We expect property transactions to be a little stronger this year than we forecast in March, in part reflecting the pick-up in mortgage approvals in recent months. But we have revised down our expectations for house price growth, having taken the view that the rationing effects of the regulatory and banking environment are likely to persist for longer than we assumed in March. That judgement about mortgage availability also means that we have revised down our forecast of the household debt-to-income ratio.

1.20 There is considerable uncertainty around any economic forecast. Chart 1.2 presents our central growth forecast with a fan showing the probability of different outcomes based on past official forecast errors. The solid black line shows our median forecast, with successive pairs of lighter shaded areas around it representing 20 per cent probability bands.

Chart 1.2: Real GDP growth fan chart



Source: ONS, OBR

The fiscal outlook

1.21 Public sector net borrowing peaked at 10.2 per cent of GDP (£153.5 billion) in 2009-10 as the late 2000s recession and financial crisis dealt the public finances a significant blow. Fiscal consolidation and economic recovery then reduced the deficit to 4.9 per cent of GDP (£89.2 billion) by 2014-15. Table 1.2 shows that we expect the deficit to continue falling, and the budget to move into surplus in 2019-20, a year later than in our March forecast.

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1.22 In structural terms – adjusting for the ups and downs of the economic cycle – the 0.5 per cent of GDP surplus in 2019-20 and 2020-21 would be the largest in at least 40 years, just topping the 0.4 per cent estimate for 2000-01. The table also shows that we expect public sector net debt to have peaked as a share of GDP last year and to fall in each year of the forecast period. Net debt is expected to fall to 68.5 per cent of GDP in 2020-21, having reversed around a quarter of the increase seen in the wake of the financial crisis.

Table 1.2: Fiscal forecast overview

	Per cent of GDP						
	Outturn	Forecast					
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Headline fiscal aggregates							
Public sector net borrowing	4.9	3.7	2.2	1.2	0.3	-0.4	-0.5
Cyclically adjusted net borrowing	4.1	3.2	2.0	1.1	0.3	-0.5	-0.5
Current budget deficit	3.2	2.2	0.8	-0.2	-1.1	-1.8	-1.9
Fiscal mandate and supplementary target							
Cyclically adjusted deficit on current budget	2.4	1.7	0.5	-0.3	-1.1	-1.8	-1.9
Public sector net debt	80.8	80.3	79.1	77.2	74.7	71.5	68.5
	Changes since March forecast						
Headline fiscal aggregates							
Public sector net borrowing	-0.1	-0.3	0.2	0.6	0.5	-0.1	
Cyclically adjusted net borrowing	-0.1	-0.4	0.1	0.5	0.5	-0.1	
Current budget deficit	0.1	0.3	-0.2	-0.6	-0.6	0.1	
Fiscal mandate and supplementary target							
Cyclically adjusted deficit on current budget	0.1	0.4	-0.1	-0.5	-0.6	0.1	
Public sector net debt	0.4	0.0	-0.6	-0.6	-0.1	-0.1	

Changes in public sector net borrowing and net debt

1.23 Chart 1.3 shows how our borrowing forecasts have changed between March and July. The pattern of revisions across the forecast is uneven from year to year, largely reflecting the uneven path of borrowing in March – in particular the steep fall in 2016-17 and 2017-18 – that has been smoothed by the Government in this Budget.

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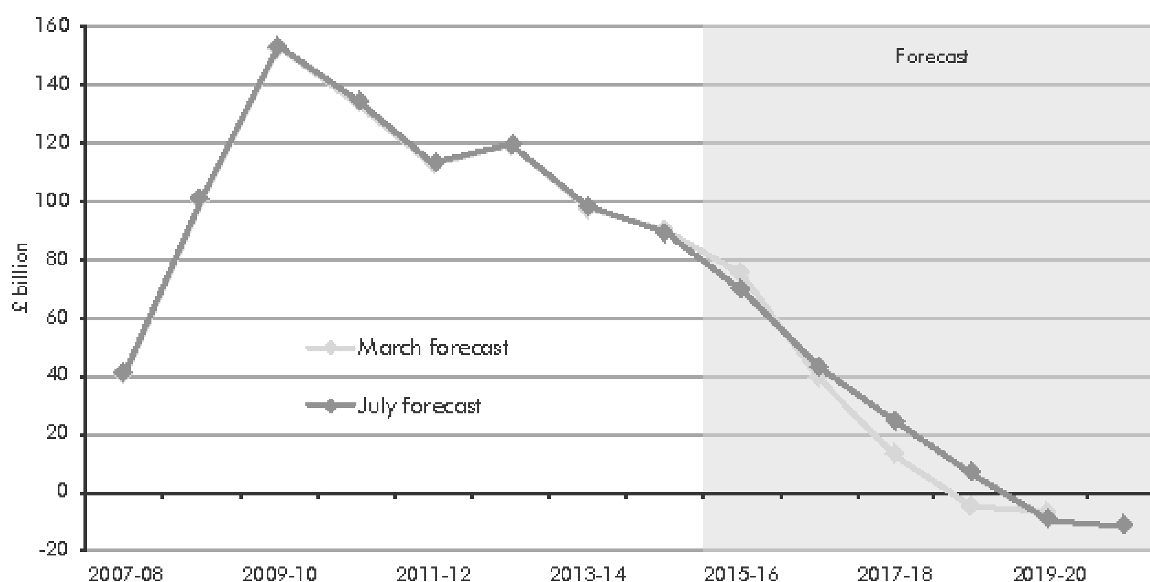
Chart 1.3: Public sector net borrowing



Source: ONS, OBR

1.24 Table 1.3 breaks down the revision in borrowing since March into different sources of change. (The table shows the effect of revisions on borrowing, so an upward revision to receipts is shown as a negative since it reduces borrowing.)

1.25 We have revised borrowing down by £5.8 billion in 2015-16. That reflects:

- stronger than expected receipts growth, particularly income tax, VAT and stamp duty on property transactions; and
- Government decisions that bear down more heavily on the deficit this year, including in-year cuts to DEL spending, raising the insurance premium tax rate and the decision to delay the introduction of tax-free childcare following a legal challenge.

1.26 We have revised borrowing up in 2016-17 and more significantly in 2017-18, while the surplus of £5.2 billion in 2018-19 that we forecast in March is now expected to be a deficit of £6.4 billion. The higher borrowing over these three years reflects the net effect of:

- upward revisions to our receipts forecast (before the effects of Budget policy decisions). The biggest source of improvement has been income tax and NICs. Receipts have also been boosted relative to March by a classification change, with expected costs of tax litigation cases switched from negative tax to capital grants (in line with National Accounts guidelines) and by an upward revision to environmental levies, which are neutral for borrowing because they increase spending equally;
- upward revisions to annually managed expenditure (AME) (again, before the effects of Budget policy measures). A methodological change raised our forecast of net public

service pension costs, while higher gilt rates, the revisions to environmental levies and the treatment of tax litigation costs also raised AME. Our forecast for payments to EU institutions is higher for 2016-17 than in March, due to a change in the expected timing of adjustments to UK contributions;

- the receipts and AME measures on the Budget 'scorecard' reduce borrowing by £12.8 billion a year on average. These include a net tax increase averaging £5.3 billion a year and cuts in welfare spending averaging £7.4 billion a year. We note in Annex A that the uncertainty around the expected yield from many of the revenue-raising measures exceeds that around most of the tax cuts;
- the scorecard measures are more than offset by the Government's decision to increase provisional departmental spending totals significantly relative to the amounts pencilled in by the Coalition Government in March. The increases in day-to-day spending on public services, grants and administration (RDEL in the table) by £24.2 billion a year on average. Relative to March, RDEL has been increased by around 6 per cent in 2016-17, 9 per cent in 2017-18 and 10 per cent in and 2018-19. Conversely, capital DEL has been reduced by a relatively modest £1.6 billion a year on average. (We treat changes in DEL spending as policy decisions, as the Government is aware of the rest of our forecast when setting the path of spending from which DELs are inferred); and
- part of the overall fiscal loosening is unwound through its indirect effects on the economy and therefore net borrowing. The largest indirect effects come through higher income tax receipts (due to higher nominal GDP growth) and lower net public service pension costs (due to smaller falls in the workforce making contributions to the schemes). The introduction of the Living Wage Premium also has a very small net effect on borrowing, as described in Annex B.

1.27 In 2019-20, we have revised the expected surplus up a little. The Government chose to increase RDEL by less than for the earlier years, which means that scorecard measures were sufficient to offset forecast changes that would otherwise have reduced the expected surplus.

1.28 The surplus rises very slightly in 2020-21, as the Government has chosen to increase RDEL as a share of GDP. This offsets various factors that would otherwise have increased the surplus further. (In Table 1.3, this increase in RDEL as a share of GDP explains why the change in cash terms is shown rising from £12.1 billion in 2019-20 to £21.6 billion in 2020-21.) The underlying factors that would have increased the surplus include fiscal drag in the tax system (when income tax thresholds rise by inflation, but earnings rise faster because of productivity) and in the welfare system (when benefits rise by inflation, reducing average awards relative to average earnings in the wider economy).

Table 1.3: Changes to public sector net borrowing since March

	£ billion						
	Estimate	Forecast					
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
March forecast	90.2	75.3	39.4	12.8	-5.2	-7.0	
July forecast	89.2	69.5	43.1	24.3	6.4	-10.0	-11.6
Change	-1.0	-5.8	3.7	11.5	11.6	-3.0	
Changes to the receipts forecast[1]	-1.9	-5.5	-10.3	-12.6	-13.5	-10.0	
Forecast changes	-1.9	-4.9	-3.7	-4.0	-3.5	-3.1	
Effect of Government decisions	0.0	-0.6	-6.5	-8.5	-9.9	-6.9	-8.2
of which:							
Scorecard measures	0.0	-1.0	-4.0	-5.1	-6.8	-5.8	-6.5
Indirect effect of Government decisions	0.0	0.4	-2.5	-3.4	-3.1	-1.1	-1.7
Changes to current AME spending[1]	0.6	2.2	-2.3	-2.0	-2.5	-3.7	
Forecast changes	0.6	2.2	4.1	6.0	8.8	10.1	
Effect of Government decisions	0.0	0.0	-6.5	-8.1	-11.3	-13.8	-15.7
of which:							
Welfare scorecard measures	0.0	-0.3	-5.6	-6.9	-9.7	-12.5	-13.3
Other scorecard measures	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	-0.1	-0.3	-0.6
Indirect effect of Government decisions	0.0	0.2	-0.9	-1.2	-1.5	-1.0	-1.8
Changes to RDEL spending[2]	0.9	-1.3	17.2	27.0	28.3	12.1	21.6
Changes to capital spending[1]	-0.5	-1.3	-0.8	-0.9	-0.8	-1.3	
Forecast AME changes[3]	-0.1	-0.3	0.9	1.4	0.1	0.4	
Scorecard AME measures	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.2	0.0	-0.1	-0.1
Changes to CDEL spending[2,3]	-0.5	-1.0	-1.8	-2.1	-0.8	-1.6	-1.9
	Summary of changes						
Total forecast change	-1.4	-3.0	1.3	3.4	5.4	7.4	
Total effect of Government decisions	0.4	-2.8	2.4	8.0	6.3	-10.4	-4.3
of which:							
Scorecard receipts and AME measures	0.0	-1.2	-9.6	-12.2	-16.7	-18.7	-20.5
RDEL and CDEL changes[3]	0.4	-2.3	15.4	24.8	27.5	10.5	19.8
Indirect effect of Government decisions	0.0	0.6	-3.4	-4.6	-4.6	-2.2	-3.5

[1] 2014-15 has been adjusted to remove the effect of ONS measurement differences. See supplementary tables published on our website for more information.
[2] The change in 2020-21 is relative to a baseline that assumes spending by departments would otherwise have remained constant as a share of potential GDP.
[3] CDEL and capital AME changes have been adjusted to exclude the £0.9 billion switch from CDEL to capital AME in 2015-16 as a result of the GAD-Milne case, and to exclude the switch from CDEL to capital AME that reflects the reclassification of government grants to Network Rail in our forecast, which is explained in note 1 of Table 4.17.
Note: this table uses the convention that a negative figure means a reduction in PSNB. i.e. an increase in receipts or a reduction in spending will have a negative effect on PSNB.

1.29 As Table 1.2 showed, the changes described above mean that the budget balance improves in every year of the forecast, but less quickly than we forecast in March. We also expect public sector net debt (PSND) to fall as a share of GDP in every year of the forecast. As well as changes to borrowing, our debt forecast has been revised substantially due to the further asset sales announced in the Budget and to a number of changes to the way we convert our borrowing forecast (an accrued measure) to an estimate of the net cash requirement (the cash measure of borrowing that drives changes in net debt). Table 1.4 shows that:

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- upward revisions to our nominal GDP forecast have reduced the ratio in most years, but the downward revision to in 2019-20 has had the opposite effect;
- changes to net borrowing have added £17 billion to debt by 2019-20;
- additional asset sales have taken a further £8 billion off net debt in 2015-16, rising to £31 billion by 2019-20. The biggest effect over the forecast comes from the Government's announcement that it will sell three-quarters of its holdings of RBS shares over the Parliament. We have assumed that this will raise around £25 billion in total, with £2 billion raised this year and around £6 billion a year thereafter; and
- revisions to outturn data have raised net debt in 2014-15, which is pushed through to subsequent years of the forecast. A correction to the treatment of APF cash balances in our forecast has also increased debt from 2015-16 onwards.

Table 1.4: Changes to public sector net debt since March

	Per cent of GDP						
	Estimate	Forecast					
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
March forecast	80.4	80.2	79.8	77.8	74.8	71.6	
July forecast	80.8	80.3	79.1	77.2	74.7	71.5	68.5
Change	0.4	0.0	-0.6	-0.6	-0.1	-0.1	
of which:							
Change in nominal GDP[1]	0.1	0.1	-0.4	-0.4	-0.2	0.3	
Change in cash level of net debt	0.3	-0.1	-0.2	-0.1	0.1	-0.4	
	£ billion						
March forecast	1479	1533	1580	1606	1617	1627	
July forecast	1486	1532	1576	1603	1619	1618	1627
Change in cash level of net debt	6	-1	-5	-3	1	-9	
of which:							
Changes to borrowing	-1	-7	-3	8	20	17	
Asset sales	0	-8	-14	-19	-25	-31	
Gilt premia	1	4	3	1	0	0	
Asset purchase facility	0	2	2	2	2	2	
Outturns	3	3	3	3	3	3	
Other factors	3	4	4	2	1	0	

[1] Non-seasonally-adjusted GDP centred end-March.

1.30 The level of PSND can be affected by classification decisions that move institutions across the boundary between private and public sectors in the National Accounts. One classification uncertainty that may be relevant to future forecasts relates to housing associations. At present, these are classified in the private sector, so their income, spending and debt do not feature in our forecast. But there is a risk that Government policies – including the social rent measure in this Budget and the Right-to-Buy proposals that are not yet firm enough to be included in this forecast – could prompt the ONS to reconsider this classification. If housing associations were to be classified as part of the public sector, their approximately £60 billion of debt would be added to PSND while the social rent reduction

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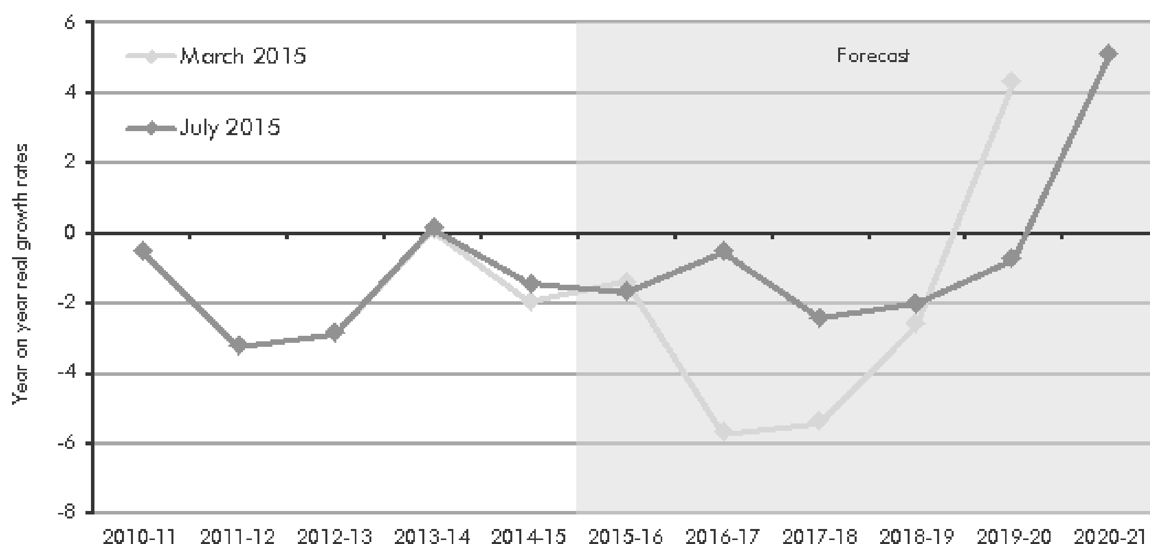
policy announced in this Budget would increase rather than reduce PSNB because the full amount of the rent reduction would then reduce public sector income, and outweigh the housing benefit and other expenditure savings.

The path of departmental spending over the forecast

1.31 The most striking feature of the fiscal plans set out in this Budget is the implications they have for the potential path of public services spending. Resource Departmental Expenditure Limits (RDEL) – which cover day-to-day central government spending on public services, grants and administration – are £83.3 billion higher in total over the current Parliament (2015-16 to 2019-20) than was assumed in the March Budget. On the basis of these provisional plans, the forthcoming Spending Review looks a lot less challenging. The squeeze pencilled in for the first year of the next Spending Review period – 2016-17 – has been eased very significantly. Over the Parliament as a whole, public services spending would fall by an average of 1.5 per cent a year in real terms, roughly in line with 1.6 per cent a year in the last. No year would see cuts as severe as in 2011-12 and 2012-13.

Chart 1.4: Year-on-year real growth in resource DEL



Note: RDEL series excludes major historical switches with AME. Details are in the supplementary fiscal tables on our website.
Source: OBR

1.32 Relative to the planned level of spending in 2015-16, these numbers imply that the Government would have to identify further real cuts in public services spending reaching a peak of £17.9 billion in 2019-20. That is less than half the £41.9 billion cut – required a year earlier in 2018-19 – that was implied by the numbers that the Coalition chose to assume in March. In both cases, once the budget balance has reached surplus (2019-20 in this forecast; 2018-19 in March) the real cut in RDEL spending begins to be reversed.

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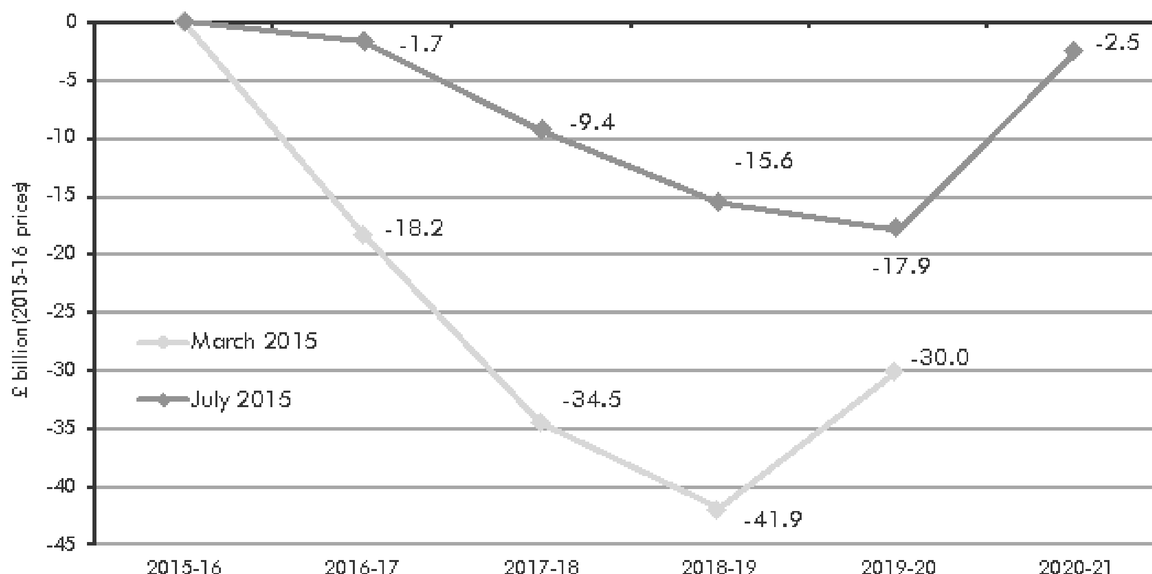
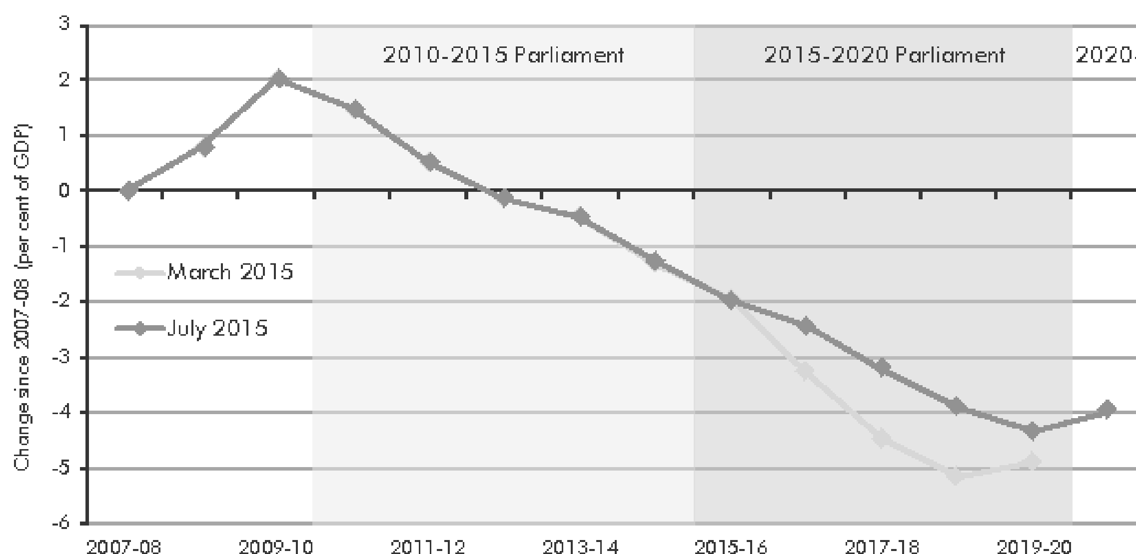
Chart 1.5: Change in real RDEL from 2015-16



Source: OBR

1.33 While the pace of real cuts that was pencilled into the March forecast has been reduced, Chart 1.6 shows that cuts to RDEL as a share of GDP in this Parliament are still expected to be of a similar size and profile as those that took place in the previous Parliament. Between the peak in 2009-10 and the planned trough in 2019-20, RDEL spending is expected to have been reduced by 6.4 per cent of GDP (£120 billion in today's terms) – with 3.3 per cent of GDP delivered in the last Parliament and 3.1 per cent of GDP in this one. At 14.5 per cent of GDP, the trough in 2019-20 would likely be the lowest share of GDP spent on public services since 1964-65, judging from the most comparable long run data.

Chart 1.6: Resource DEL as a share of GDP in successive Parliaments



Note: RDEL series excludes major historical switches with AME. Details are in the supplementary fiscal tables on our website.
Source: OBR

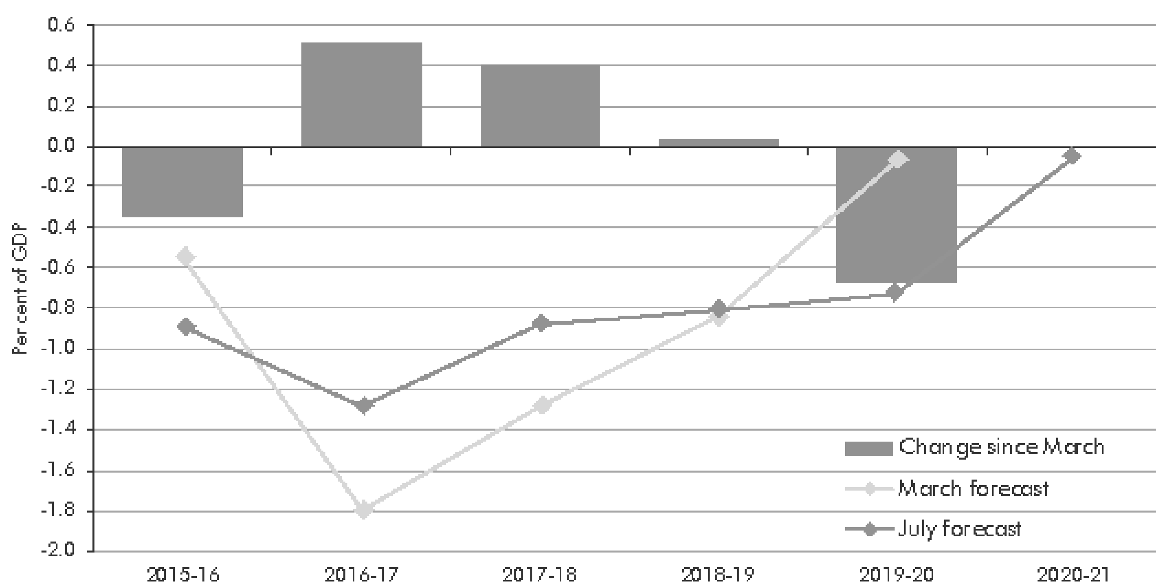
Structural fiscal tightening

1.34 Our estimate of the margin of spare capacity in the economy is small in 2015-16 at just 0.6 per cent of potential output and we expect this 'output gap' to close in 2018-19. So the path of structural borrowing is similar to that of headline borrowing described above.

1.35 The year-on-year change in the structural budget deficit – public sector net borrowing adjusted for the size of the output gap – is a common measure of the pace of fiscal consolidation. It has drawbacks when estimates of potential output change significantly, but is more useful when, as currently appears the case, potential output growth is more stable.

1.36 Chart 1.7 shows how the Government's decision to slow the fiscal tightening and smooth the path from year to year implies a more even pace of consolidation than in our last forecast. The figures assumed by the Coalition in March implied a substantial acceleration in the consolidation next year, with the planned reduction in the structural budget deficit rising from 0.5 per cent of GDP in 2015-16 to 1.8 per cent in 2016-17. (That would have equalled the sharpest tightening on this measure since 1981-82.) Thanks to the in-year spending cuts announced in June and the stronger-than-expected receipts growth this year – followed by the Government's willingness to allow more headline borrowing in 2016-17 – the acceleration in the consolidation next year is now much less marked, with the structural deficit falling by 0.9 per cent of GDP in 2015-16 and then 1.3 per cent in 2016-17.

Chart 1.7: Year-on-year changes in cyclically adjusted net borrowing



Source: OBR

Performance against the Government's fiscal targets

1.37 The *Charter for Budget Responsibility* requires the OBR to judge whether the Government has a greater than 50 per cent chance of hitting its fiscal targets under existing policy. The current version of the *Charter* (updated by the Coalition Government in December 2014 and available on our website) sets out three targets formally in place for this forecast:

- the **fiscal mandate**: *"a forward-looking aim to achieve cyclically adjusted current balance by the end of the third year of the rolling, 5-year forecast period"*. For the purposes of this forecast, the third year of the forecast period is 2018-19;
- the **supplementary target**: *"an aim for public sector net debt as a percentage of GDP to be falling in 2016-17"*; and
- the **welfare cap**: a ceiling on cash spending on a subset of social security benefits and tax credits *"at a level set out by the Treasury in the most recently published Budget report, over the rolling 5-year forecast period."* We assess performance against the cap formally at each Autumn Statement and monitor progress in our Budget forecasts.

1.38 But alongside the Budget the new Government has now published a revised draft *Charter* that will be laid before Parliament for approval ahead of our next fiscal forecast. This would:

- replace the current fiscal mandate with *"a target for a surplus on public sector net borrowing by the end of 2019-20"*. Once a headline surplus has been achieved the mandate will require *"a target for a surplus on public sector net borrowing in each subsequent year"*. (The draft *Charter* further specifies that *"these targets apply unless and until the OBR assess that there is a significant negative shock to the UK. A significant negative shock is defined as real GDP growth of less than 1 per cent on a rolling 4 quarter-on-4 quarter basis"*); and
- replace the supplementary target with *"a target for public sector net debt as a percentage of GDP to be falling in each year"* to 2019-20.

1.39 On the basis of our central forecast, we judge that the Government has a greater than 50 per cent chance of meeting both the current and proposed fiscal mandates. We estimate that the cyclically adjusted current balance will move from a deficit of 2.4 per cent of GDP in 2014-15 to a surplus of 1.1 per cent in the mandate year of 2018-19. It is also forecast to be in surplus by 0.3 per cent of GDP in 2017-18, thereby meeting the mandate as it applied in our March forecast – but by a significantly smaller margin than the Government was comfortable with then. Our central forecast also shows a PSNB surplus of £10.0 billion (0.4 per cent of GDP) in 2019-20, meeting the proposed fiscal mandate.

1.40 In terms of the current and proposed supplementary debt targets, our central forecast shows debt falling as a share of GDP in every year of the forecast, thereby meeting both. Debt falls as a share of GDP in 2015-16 thanks only to the significant financial asset sales that are

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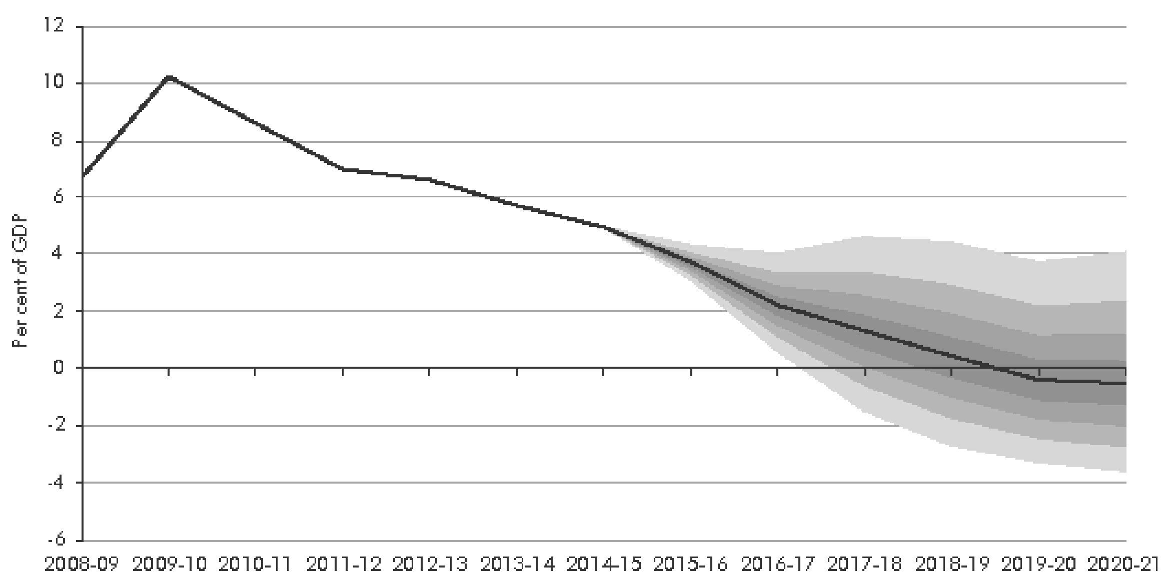
planned during the year. It falls more comfortably thereafter because the primary budget balance is stronger by then. These conclusions are unchanged from March.

1.41 The Government has reset the level of spending permitted under the welfare cap in this Budget, as the *Charter* requires it to do at the start of each Parliament. The new cap is significantly lower than the old, by 13 per cent in 2019-20. This reflects the Government's decision to lock in the savings from the package of working-age welfare spending cuts that it has announced in the Budget, which reach £12.5 billion in our forecast by 2019-20. The largest of those cuts are focused on reducing the generosity of tax credits and working-age benefits, by freezing most in cash terms for four years, by changing maximum entitlements and withdrawal rates in tax credits and universal credit, and by forcing social sector landlords to cut the rents that are subsidised through housing benefit.

1.42 All forecasts are subject to significant uncertainty. Chart 1.8 shows our median forecast for PSNB – the fiscal aggregate that is targeted in the proposed fiscal mandate. Successive pairs of shaded areas around the median forecast represent 20 per cent probability bands. As in Chart 1.2 above, the bands show the probability of different outcomes if past official errors were a reasonable guide to future forecast errors.

Chart 1.8: Public sector net borrowing fan chart



Source: ONS, OBR

1.43 The uncertainties around our central forecast reflect those regarding the outlook for the economy and those regarding the performance of revenues and spending in any given state of the economy. So we test the robustness of our judgement in three ways:

- first, by looking at past forecast errors, if our central forecasts are as accurate as official forecasts were in the past, then there is a roughly 70 per cent chance that the CACB will be in balance or surplus in 2018-19 (as the current fiscal mandate requires)

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and around a 55 per cent chance that PSNB will be in surplus in 2019-20 (as the proposed fiscal mandate requires);

- second, by looking at its sensitivity to varying key features of the economic forecast. The biggest risk to the achievement of the current fiscal mandate relates to our estimates of future potential output. If potential output is lower than we estimate, implying a positive output gap in the target year, the structural position of the public finances would be worse. If potential output was around 1½ per cent lower than in our central forecast in 2018-19, then the probability of meeting the mandate would fall to 50 per cent, meaning that it would be as likely as not that the mandate would be missed. The proposed fiscal mandate would also be sensitive to cyclical movements in the economy. A shortfall in real GDP of just 0.7 per cent in 2019 would be sufficient to reduce the expected budget surplus to balance; and

- third, by looking at alternative economic scenarios. As this is our first forecast of the new Parliament, we have looked back at the first OBR forecast of the last Parliament in June 2010 and at the errors to which it was subject in order to frame three scenarios. In our 'history repeats' scenario, we assume that we have made similar errors in this forecast to those that were made in June 2010. We assume that employment would be around 1 million higher by the start of 2020, implying total growth of around 2 million over the next five years, but that GDP and productivity growth would be significantly weaker than in the central forecast. In our 'employment-rich growth' scenario, employment again grows by around 1 million more than in our central forecast, but we hold our central GDP forecast unchanged. And in our 'strong GDP growth' scenario, higher employment is accompanied by our central productivity forecast, implying faster GDP growth. Taking these scenarios in reverse order – from most to least favourable – in the 'strong GDP growth' and 'employment-rich growth' scenarios, the current and proposed mandates and supplementary targets would be met, with greater room to spare in the 'strong growth' case, whereas those targets would be missed in the 'history repeats' scenario. Welfare cap spending would be higher in all scenarios, since the cap is set in cash terms and higher population growth leads to higher cash spending; it would be lower as a share of GDP in the 'strong GDP growth' scenario. Welfare cap spending would only exceed the permitted 2 per cent forecast margin in the 'history repeats' scenario.

2 Developments since the last forecast

Introduction

2.1 This chapter summarises:

- the main economic and fiscal data developments since our last forecast in March (from paragraph 2.2); and
- recent external forecasts for the UK economy and public finances (from paragraph 2.14).

Economic developments

Data revisions

2.2 Since our March forecast, the ONS has published *Quarterly National Accounts* (QNA) for the fourth quarter of 2014 and the first quarter of 2015. Both included revisions to GDP growth back to the first quarter of 2014. The combined effect of these revisions is that real GDP in the fourth quarter of 2014 is now estimated to be up 3.4 per cent on a year earlier, compared to the 2.7 per cent estimated at the time of our March forecast (Table 2.1).

2.3 The upward revision was due to private consumption (in the March QNA) and private investment (in the June QNA). The latter reflected higher residential investment, due to a change in the way the ONS measures construction prices. The ONS had been modelling prices using statistical methods, reflecting previous concerns over the quality of data used to compile construction prices. The QNA introduced an interim solution that has resulted in a downward revision to construction output prices and an upward revision to construction volumes over 2014 and the start of 2015.[1]

Table 2.1: Contributions to real GDP growth in the year to 2014Q4

	Percentage points						
	Private consumption	Government consumption	Government investment	Private investment	Net trade	Stocks	GDP growth, per cent
March data	1.4	0.4	0.2	0.6	0.5	-0.4	2.7
Latest data	1.9	0.4	0.1	0.9	0.4	-0.4	3.4
Difference[1]	0.6	-0.1	-0.1	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.7

[1] Difference in unrounded numbers, rounded to one decimal place.
Note: Components may not sum to total due to rounding and the statistical discrepancy.

[1] See ONS, June 2015, *Interim solution for construction price indices.*

2.4 Since our March forecast, the whole economy GDP deflator and its components have also been revised. The net effect of these various revisions has been small, so that changes in nominal GDP (Table 2.2) mainly reflect the movements in real GDP. The main exceptions were a downward revision to private investment prices (due to the change in the measurement of construction prices mentioned above, which offset the upward revision to volumes) and a stronger contribution from the measured price of stocks.

Table 2.2: Contributions to nominal GDP growth in the year to 2014Q4

	Percentage points						
	Private consumption	Government consumption	Government investment	Private investment	Net trade	Stocks	GDP growth, per cent
March data	2.3	0.2	0.2	0.8	0.8	-0.5	3.8
Latest data	2.8	0.1	0.2	0.8	0.7	-0.2	4.6
Difference[1]	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.1	0.4	0.8

[1] Difference in unrounded numbers, rounded to one decimal place.
Note: Components may not sum to total due to rounding and the statistical discrepency.

GDP growth since the March 2015 forecast

2.5 In the first quarter of 2015, real GDP is estimated to have risen by 0.4 per cent, below our March forecast of 0.7 per cent (Table 2.3). The shortfall reflected weaker net trade, as imports grew much faster than expected. There was also a weaker stocks contribution, with partial offsets from private and government consumption.

Table 2.3: Contributions to real GDP growth in 2015Q1

	Percentage points						
	Private consumption	Government consumption	Government investment	Private investment	Net trade	Stocks	GDP growth, per cent
March forecast	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.2	-0.1	0.0	0.7
Latest data	0.6	0.2	0.0	0.4	-0.6	-0.2	0.4
Difference[1]	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.2	-0.5	-0.2	-0.3

[1] Difference in unrounded numbers, rounded to one decimal place.
Note: Components may not sum to total due to rounding and the statistical discrepency.

2.6 Nominal GDP growth was also weaker than expected in the first quarter of 2015 (Table 2.4). In addition to the real GDP errors described above, this reflected a broad-based negative surprise in prices, with only a stronger terms of trade providing a partial offset.

Table 2.4: Contributions to nominal GDP growth in 2015Q1

	Percentage points						
	Private consumption	Government consumption	Government investment	Private investment	Net trade	Stocks	GDP growth, per cent
March forecast	0.4	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.2	0.6	1.6
Latest data	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.3	-0.1	0.2	0.7
Difference[1]	-0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.3	-0.5	-0.9

[1] Difference in unrounded numbers, rounded to one decimal place.
Note: Components may not sum to total due to rounding and the statistical discrepency.

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2.7 In terms of income components, the slight weakness in nominal GDP growth in 2014 and early 2015 relative to our forecast has been concentrated in employer social contributions (Table 2.5). Wages and salaries and profits, key drivers of tax receipts, have been stronger than expected. In terms of expenditure components, the weakness has been concentrated in net trade. Private consumption, another key driver of tax receipts, has also been stronger than expected. So while nominal GDP growth has been slightly weaker than forecast, the composition of growth appears to have been more favourable for the public finances. Recent public finance outturns are described in paragraph 2.13.

Table 2.5: Contributions to nominal GDP growth from 2014Q1 to 2015Q1

	Percentage points						
	Wages and salaries	Employer social contributions	Mixed income	Private operating surplus	Other operating surplus[2]	Other[3]	GDP growth, per cent
March forecast	2.1	0.4	0.5	1.1	0.9	0.5	5.5
Latest data	2.2	-0.4	0.5	1.5	1.2	0.2	5.3
Difference[1]	0.2	-0.8	0.1	0.4	0.3	-0.3	-0.2

[1] Difference in unrounded numbers, rounded to one decimal place.
[2] Includes operating surplus of households, NPISH, general government and public corporations.
[3] Includes the subsidies, taxes on production and products and the statistical discrepency.

Conditioning assumptions

2.8 Differences between outturns and our March conditioning assumptions have generally been relatively small. Our current conditioning assumption for the trade weighted exchange rate in the third quarter of 2015 is now higher than in March, reflecting an appreciation against both the US dollar and the euro (Table 2.6). Equity prices are slightly lower than our March assumption and oil prices slightly above. These assumptions are based on average financial market prices in the 10 days to 25 June. Further developments in Greece have since led to greater volatility in these financial market prices.

Table 2.6: Conditioning assumptions in 2015Q3

	Oil price ($ per barrel)	US$/£ exchange rate	euro/£ exchange rate	ERI exchange rate (index)	Equity prices (FTSE all-share index)	Mortgage interest rates (%)[1]
March forecast	64.4	1.54	1.37	91.1	3787	3.1
Latest assumption	65.0	1.57	1.40	92.7	3720	3.0
Per cent difference	0.9	2.1	1.7	1.8	-1.8	0.0

[1] Difference is in percentage points.

Other forecasts variables

2.9 CPI, RPI and house price inflation were all as expected in the March forecast, coming in at 0.1, 1.0 and 8.5 per cent respectively in the first quarter of 2015 (Table 2.7).

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Table 2.7: March forecast variables and outturns in 2015Q1

	CPI inflation (%)	RPI inflation (%)	Employment growth (%)	Unemployment rate (%)	Average earnings growth (%)	House price growth (%)
March forecast	0.1	1.0	1.5	5.5	2.7	8.5
Latest assumption	0.1	1.0	1.8	5.5	2.9	8.5
Percentage point difference	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.0

NB. Differences may not sum due to rounding

2.10 Annual employment growth in the first quarter of 2015 was 0.3 percentage points stronger than expected, continuing the pattern from recent forecasts. This was due to a higher participation rate, with the unemployment rate in line with our March forecast at 5.5 per cent.

2.11 With real GDP coming in below our forecast in the first quarter, growth in productivity per worker was again weaker than we had forecast. However, an unexpected fall in average hours meant that growth in hourly productivity was closer to forecast in the first quarter of 2015. Despite weak growth in productivity per worker, year-on-year growth in whole economy average earnings was stronger than forecast.

2.12 Global developments have been mixed since we finalised our March forecast. GDP in the US unexpectedly fell in the first quarter of 2015, although some of the weakness related to poor weather conditions and labour disputes disrupting port activity. In contrast, the euro area had been looking more positive as the ECB's quantitative easing, a slowing pace of fiscal consolidation and recent falls in the euro supported quarterly growth of 0.4 per cent. Those tentative signs of improvement in activity must be weighed against the risks associated with the deterioration in the Greek debt crisis in recent weeks. Russia continues to be affected by Ukraine-related sanctions and low oil prices, with GDP falling at an annual 2.2 per cent in the first quarter of 2015. Chinese growth continues to ease, reaching 7.0 per cent on a year earlier in the first quarter.

Fiscal data developments

2.13 The latest ONS estimate for public sector net borrowing (PSNB) in 2014-15 was £89.2 billion, £9.3 billion less than 2013-14 and £1.0 billion below the estimate we made in March. The latest public finances data show PSNB in the first two months of 2015-16 was £5.1 billion lower than the same period last year. Our March forecast assumed a fall of £13.9 billion for 2015-16 as a whole. Income tax, NICs and corporation tax receipts have all recorded stronger growth so far this year than the full-year rates we forecast in March. Central government spending growth has been lower than expected, although the timing of central government grants to local authorities has played a part in that. Our latest fiscal forecast is discussed in Chapter 4.

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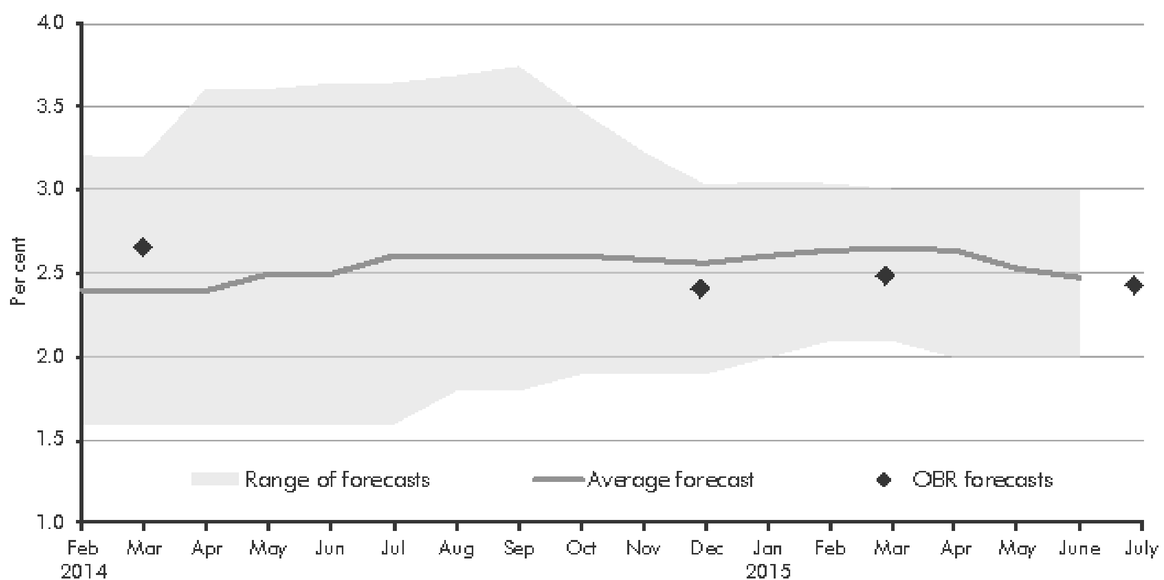
Developments in outside forecasts

2.14 Many private sector, academic and other outside organisations produce forecasts for the UK economy.[2] This section sets out some of the movements in these forecasts since our March 2015 *Economic and fiscal outlook (EFO)*. When interpreting the average of outside forecasts, it is important to bear in mind that different analysts forecast different variables and the average forecast is not constrained to paint an internally consistent picture.

Real GDP growth

2.15 Outside forecasts for GDP growth in 2015 were rising marginally in the months preceding our March forecast (Chart 2.1). Since then, expectations have fallen, converging on our March forecast of 2.5 per cent. We have revised our 2015 forecast down slightly, to just below the latest independent average, as the result of a weaker-than-expected outturn in the first quarter of 2015 and the effect of in-year spending cuts that were announced in June. For 2016, the average outside forecast for GDP growth has remained at 2.3 per cent in the time between our March and latest forecasts. That is in line with our current forecast.

Chart 2.1: Forecasts for real GDP growth in 2015



Source: HM Treasury, OBR

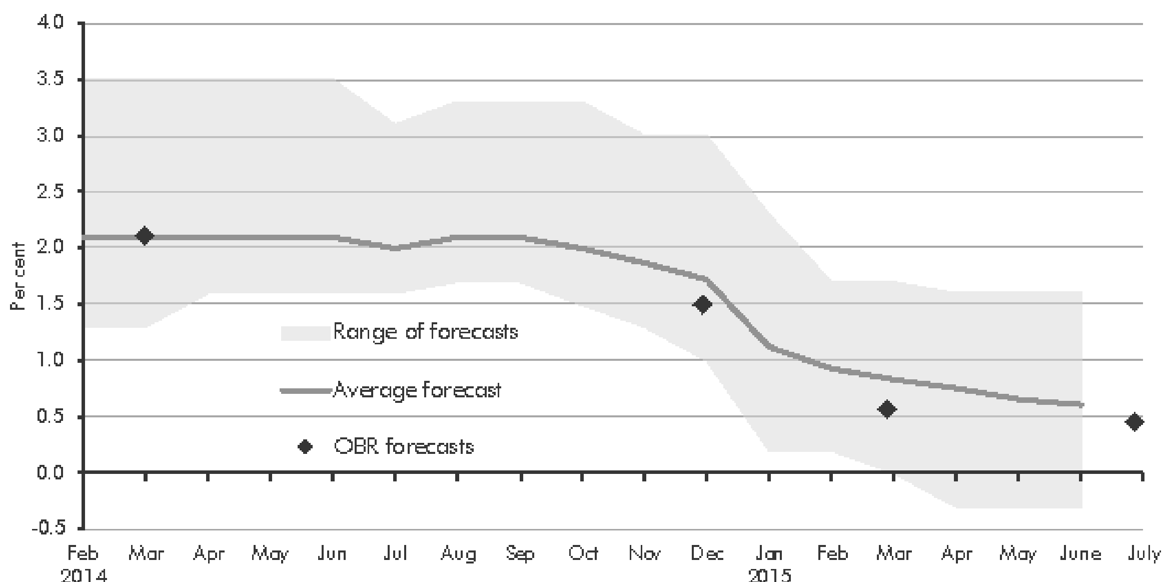
2.16 Looking at the smaller sample of medium-term forecasts compiled in May, the average forecast for GDP growth in 2017 has fallen by 0.2 percentage points since February to sit 0.1 percentage points below our current forecast at 2.3 per cent. The average forecasts for 2018 and 2019 have increased by 0.1 and 0.2 percentage point to 2.5 and 2.4 per cent respectively. This compares to our forecast of 2.4 per cent in both years.

[2] See HM Treasury, June 2015, *Forecasts for the UK economy: a comparison of independent forecasts*. A full list of contributors is available at the back of the Treasury publication. A number of financial reporting services also monitor average or consensus figures.

Inflation

2.17 The average forecast for CPI inflation in the fourth quarter of 2015 has fallen slightly in recent months, converging on the 0.6 per cent we forecast in March (Chart 2.2). We have now revised down our forecast by 0.2 percentage points reflecting the further appreciation of sterling relative to March. The average forecast for CPI inflation in the fourth quarter of 2016 is 1.8 per cent, which is higher than our forecast of 1.3 per cent.

Chart 2.2: Forecasts for CPI inflation in the fourth quarter of 2015



Source: HM Treasury, OBR

Public finances

2.18 The average forecasts for PSNB in 2015-16 and 2016-17 have both fallen since our March forecast. Medium-term forecasts, compiled in May, suggested PSNB would fall to £20 billion by 2018-19, where our March forecast showed a surplus of £5 billion. We noted then that as well as reflecting differences in views about prospects for the economy, external forecasters might base their judgements on what they consider to be the most likely path of fiscal policy. That seemed particularly relevant in the run-up to the General Election. The significant fiscal loosening announced by the new Government in this Budget has reduced the gap between our medium-term forecast and the latest average of external forecasts. It remains to be seen whether those external forecasts are revised further in light of the new policies and forecasts set out in the Budget and this *EFO*.

3 Economic outlook

Introduction

3.1 This chapter:

- sets out our estimates of the amount of spare capacity in the economy and the likely growth in its productive potential (from paragraph 3.2);
- describes the key conditioning assumptions for the forecast, including monetary policy, fiscal policy and the world economy (from paragraph 3.25);
- sets out our short- and medium-term real GDP growth forecasts, as spare capacity is brought back into productive use (from paragraph 3.43) and the associated outlooks for inflation (from paragraph 3.54) and nominal GDP (from paragraph 3.68);
- discusses recent developments and prospects for the household, corporate, government and external sectors of the economy (from paragraph 3.71); and
- outlines risks and uncertainties (from paragraph 3.108) and compares our central forecast to those of selected external organisations (from paragraph 3.110).

Potential output and the output gap

3.2 Judgements about the amount of spare capacity in the economy (the 'output gap') and the growth rate of potential output provide the foundations of our forecast. Together they determine the scope for growth in GDP in the next five years as activity returns to a level consistent with maintaining stable inflation in the long term. GDP growth is an important driver of trends in the overall budget deficit and the path of public sector debt, for which the Government has proposed new targets in this Budget.

3.3 Estimating the size of the output gap also allows us to judge how much of the budget deficit at any given time is cyclical and how much is structural.[1] In other words, how much will disappear automatically, as the recovery boosts revenues and reduces spending, and how much will be left when economic activity has returned to its full potential.

3.4 In this section, we first assess how far from potential the economy is currently operating before considering the pace at which potential output will grow in the future.

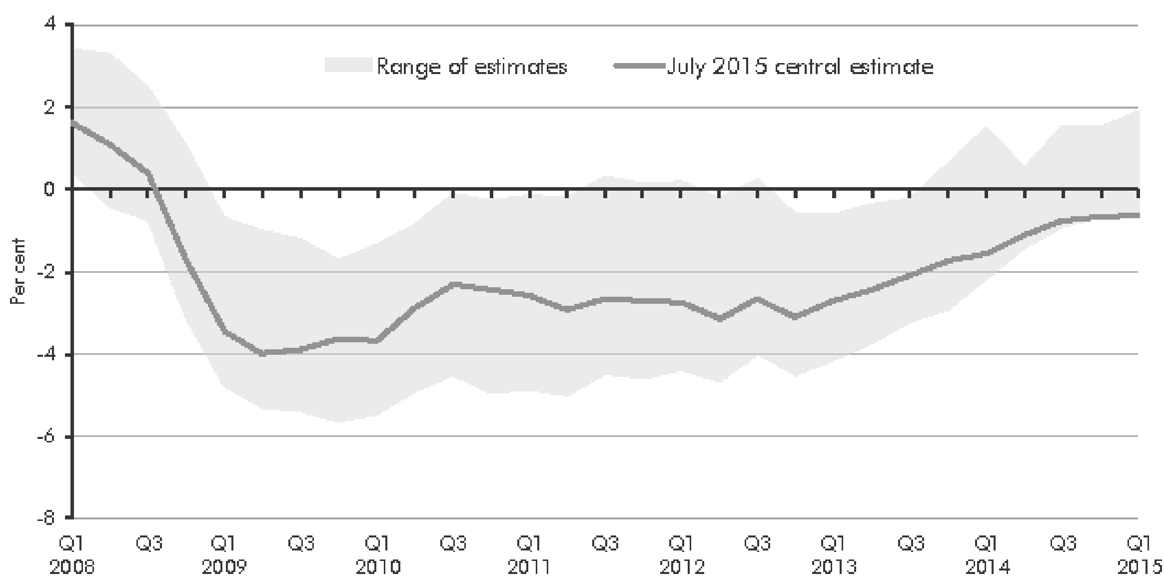
[1] The methodology we use to do so is described in Helgadottir *et al* (2012): *Working Paper No.3: Cyclically adjusting the public finances*.

The latest estimates of the output gap

3.5 The first step in our forecast process is to assess how the current level of activity in the economy compares with the potential level consistent with stable inflation in the long term. We cannot measure the supply potential of the economy directly, but various techniques can be used to estimate it indirectly, including cyclical indicators, statistical filters and production functions. In practice, every method has its limitations and no approach entirely avoids the application of judgement. We therefore consider a broad set of evidence when reaching a judgement on spare capacity.

3.6 Chart 3.1 shows a range of estimates of the output gap implied by nine different techniques, as well as our own latest central estimate.[2] All of these estimates showed spare capacity increasing during the course of the late 2000s recession, and the range between them increased. The swathe remained relatively stable until early 2013 when actual growth picked up. Most estimates have since tightened, but the range remains wide, with estimates varying from -0.7 to +1.9 per cent in the first quarter of 2015. The mid-point of the range is now consistent with a positive output gap, but six of the nine estimation techniques suggest that it remains negative. In any event, even the range illustrated here may understate the true degree of uncertainty, as such estimates are likely to change as new data become available and past data are revised. Our judgement – explained below – is consistent with an output gap at present that is near the bottom of the range implied by the models that we monitor.

Chart 3.1: Range of output gap model estimates



Source: OBR

[2] The individual output gap estimates are included in the supplementary economy tables available on our website. The approaches – and the uncertainties associated with them – are discussed in Murray (2014): *Working Paper No.5: Output gap measurement: judgement and uncertainty*.

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3.7 The cyclical indicators approaches that we previously placed greatest weight on implied that the output gap began to narrow in 2012, even though growth remained relatively weak. 'Aggregate composite' (AC) estimates imply that spare capacity continued to be used up at pace, and that output moved above its sustainable level towards the end of 2013. 'Principal components analysis' (PCA) estimates also suggest a significant narrowing of the gap through 2013, but with it remaining stable and slightly negative since the end of 2013.[3]

3.8 The AC estimates place a relatively large weight on capacity utilisation indicators, whereas our PCA estimates attach greater importance to recruitment difficulties indicators that have remained reasonably stable over the recent past – although there are signs of emerging skill shortages in some areas.

3.9 Chart 3.3, which shows estimates derived through statistical filters that augment output data with other information, demonstrates that:

- capacity utilisation indicators would suggest firms are operating at levels associated with significant overheating;
- CPI inflation has fallen to around zero, which could in principle suggest more slack in the economy. But we do not consider that likely, since the decline in recent months largely reflects lower food and petrol prices, and the effects of sterling appreciation. The inflation measure that underpins our filters is adjusted for the direct influence of food and oil costs, but in reality only partially so, as these costs also have indirect effects on other prices;
- the unemployment rate has continued to fall, reaching 5.5 per cent in the first quarter of 2015. Complementing output data with a filter-based structural unemployment estimate (informed by changes in real wages and productivity) would suggest that the output gap closed at a steady pace between the end of 2012 and 2014, but that the rate slowed in the latest quarter; and
- a production function approach, which applies filters to the individual components of production, would suggest that the output gap has been relatively stable over recent quarters. The amount of slack within the latest quarter is concentrated within total factor productivity in particular.

[3] More details are set out in our *Briefing Paper No.2: Estimating the output gap* and in Pybus (2011): *Working Paper No.1: Estimating the UK's historical output gap*.

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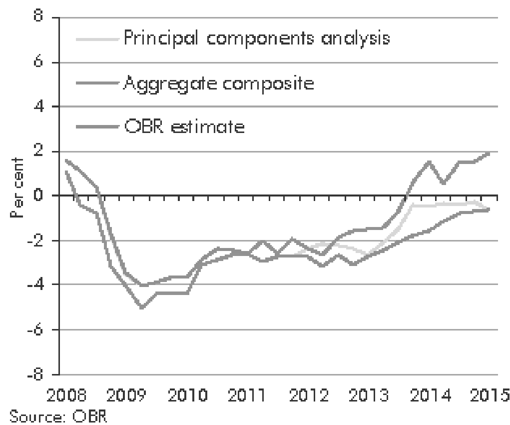
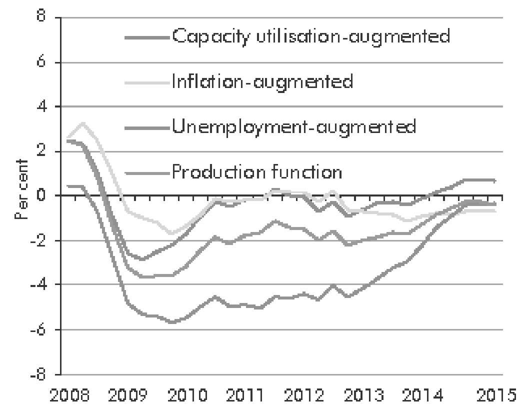
Chart 3.2: Cyclical indicator-based estimates of the output gap



Source: OBR

Chart 3.3: Filter-based estimates of the output gap



3.10 The unemployment rate in the first quarter of 2015 was in line with our March forecast. But, contrary to our expectations, the participation rate increased over the quarter, average hours fell, and hourly productivity again underperformed, rising by only 0.1 per cent.

3.11 Considering the balance of evidence, we now judge that the output gap was 0.1 percentage points wider in the first quarter of this year than we forecast in March, at -0.6 per cent of potential output. This is towards the lower end of the broad swathe of estimates illustrated in Chart 3.1, but closer to those to which we attach more weight. Assuming a small and narrowing negative output gap looks appropriate given the recent evidence that wage growth is now picking up, while broader inflationary pressures remain subdued.

3.12 Headline output growth was 0.3 percentage points below forecast in the first quarter but growth in 2014 has been revised up, implying that the level of potential output is slightly higher than in March. We attribute half of the -0.6 per cent output gap to the employment rate lying below its sustainable rate, and the other half to productivity per worker remaining below its potential.

3.13 We now assume that average hours are in line with their sustainable level, so that the productivity shortfall is confined to output-per-hour lying below our estimate of its potential (i.e. cyclical weakness in actual hourly productivity on top of the large structural shortfall that built up during and since the late 2000s financial crisis). We had previously assumed that average hours were somewhat above their trend level, but that this was implicitly offset by output-per-hour lying even further below its trend level.

3.14 Labour Force Survey (LFS) data suggest that the amount of hours that workers currently desire to work are higher than the hours they actually work, which would imply some margin of slack. But it is not clear that this gap will be closed by actual hours rising. It could equally do so if desired hours fall as income growth recovers. Conversely, the rise in actual

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hours worked has not been matched by 'usual' hours worked, with the difference reflecting a reduction in the amount of holiday leave taken that may prove to be temporary.

3.15 Our estimate of the trend participation rate in the first quarter of 2015 is little changed, but we have marginally revised down our estimate of the structural rate of unemployment over the recent past, to 5.2 per cent from our previous estimate of 5.35 per cent. (But we have also revised this measure up in later years of the forecast, as explained in paragraph 3.21.) Trends in recent data appear to justify a small adjustment to our central view. These include, but are not limited to:

- the ageing of the population. Older people are relatively less likely to be unemployed at present (and more likely to be inactive), which may be reducing the overall average;
- greater flexibility within jobs may be allowing adjustments to be made through hours rather than employment;
- self-employment has become a more common alternative for some, perhaps leading to a temporary transition to such work rather than unemployment;
- welfare reforms – not limited to recent measures, but including reforms in the 1990s and the introduction of tax credits in the early 2000s – and increases in the personal allowance may have supported employment. But reforms that encouraged a move out of inactivity may have also increased flows into unemployment; and
- the speed of the fall in the unemployment rate coupled with muted earnings growth could be viewed as consistent with a lower structural rate of unemployment, though the recent pick-up in private sector wage growth points to the need to wait for further evidence before drawing stronger conclusions than we have to date.

3.16 The small downward revision does not reflect a precisely calibrated judgement, and we will keep this under review for future forecasts.

3.17 Charts 3.4 and 3.5 compare our central output gap estimates for 2015 and 2016 to those produced by other forecasters, as set out in the Treasury's June *Comparison of independent forecasts*. The average estimate is -0.8 per cent in 2015 and -0.4 per cent in 2016, slightly wider than our forecast of -0.6 per cent for 2015 and in line with our forecast for 2016.

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Chart 3.4: Estimates of the output gap in 2015

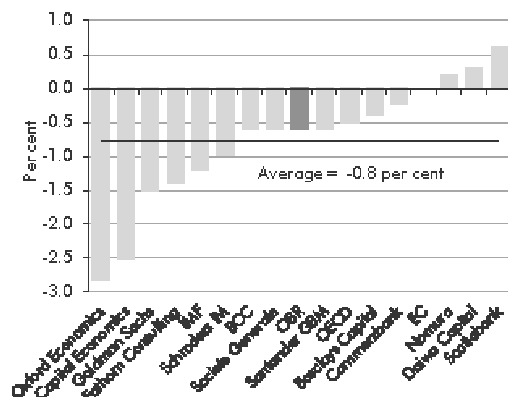
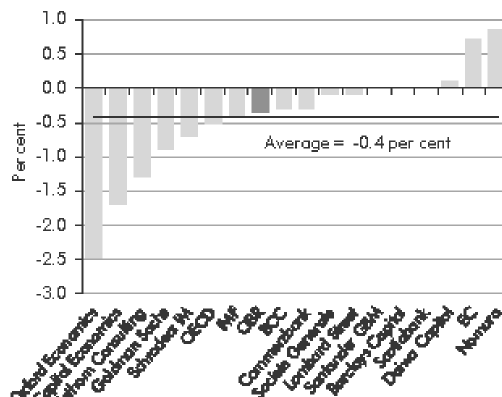


Chart 3.5: Estimates of the output gap in 2016



Source: HM Treasury, plus updates where known

The growth of potential output

3.18 In March, we forecast a gradual strengthening of potential output growth over the forecast period and that remains our central judgement. But that outcome depends on the most important uncertainty in our (and most people's) economic forecast: the timing and strength of the long-awaited return to sustained productivity growth.

3.19 The growth of potential output-per-hour converges slowly towards its historical average through the forecast period. That reflects our view that the slow pace of financial system normalisation and the related pace at which resources are reallocated to more productive uses will continue to weigh on the sustainable rate of growth – by diminishing amounts – for some years. But since it is difficult to explain the abrupt fall and persistent weakness of productivity in recent years, it is also hard to judge when or if productivity growth will return to its historical average.[4]

3.20 We expect that the long-term decline in average hours will reassert itself as productivity recovers and assume that population growth will slow in line with the ONS's current principal population projections (these will be updated later this year). We also continue to expect the potential participation rate to be roughly flat over the forecast period, as the consequences of the proportion of older people with lower-than-average participation rates increasing is almost offset by age-specific participation rates rising at older ages.

3.21 The Government has announced a number of measures that may have an effect on labour supply over the coming years. The introduction of a Living Wage Premium for those aged 25 and over in particular has led us to lower potential employment and average hours by small amounts, which have been partially offset by a positive compositional effect on hourly productivity given the concentration of the reduction in total hours worked at the bottom of

[4] In Chapter 5 of our December 2014 *EFO* we presented two scenarios that considered the implications of productivity growth remaining stuck at the low levels of recent years and of growth rebounding in line with the strongest UK performance of recent decades.

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the earnings distribution. In total, these changes – which we discuss more fully in Annex B – have reduced our forecast for the level of potential output by 0.1 per cent in 2020. Within that, we now expect the structural rate of unemployment to rise gradually over the forecast period to 5.4 per cent, which essentially offsets the downward revision that we have made to its level at the beginning of the period.

3.22 Welfare reforms announced in the Budget will also affect work incentives by changing the balance of in- and out-of-work income, but we have not explicitly adjusted our labour supply forecasts in response, in part because some of the measures work in different directions, but also reflecting the difficulty in finely calibrating what is an uncertain judgement.

Table 3.1: Potential output growth forecast

	Annual growth rate (per cent)				
	Potential productivity[1]	Potential average hours	Potential employment rate[2]	Potential population[2]	Potential output[3]
2015	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.6	2.1
2016	1.8	-0.1	-0.1	0.6	2.2
2017	2.0	-0.2	-0.1	0.6	2.3
2018	2.1	-0.2	-0.1	0.5	2.3
2019	2.2	-0.2	-0.1	0.6	2.4
2020	2.2	-0.2	-0.1	0.6	2.5
2015-2019 average					
March forecast	1.8	-0.1	0.0	0.6	2.3
July forecast	1.9	-0.2	-0.1	0.6	2.3
Change	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

[1] Output per hour.
[2] Corresponding to those aged 16 and over.
[3] Components may not sum to total due to rounding.

3.23 Our latest forecast assumes that potential output was around 11½ per cent lower than an extrapolation of the Budget 2008 forecast by 2014-15 and that it will be almost 14 per cent below that extrapolation by 2020-21. Even the most optimistic external assessments of potential output continue to lie well below the pre-crisis trend implied by Budget 2008. The range presented in the chart illustrates some of the uncertainty surrounding this crucial judgement – we test the sensitivity of the Government's current fiscal targets to it in Chapter 5.

3.24 Chart 3.6 also presents a comparison against our June 2010 forecast. Potential and actual growth from early 2010 to the present underperformed against that forecast by 3.5 per cent and 2.8 per cent respectively over its five-year horizon. We consider our employment and productivity errors in Box 3.1.

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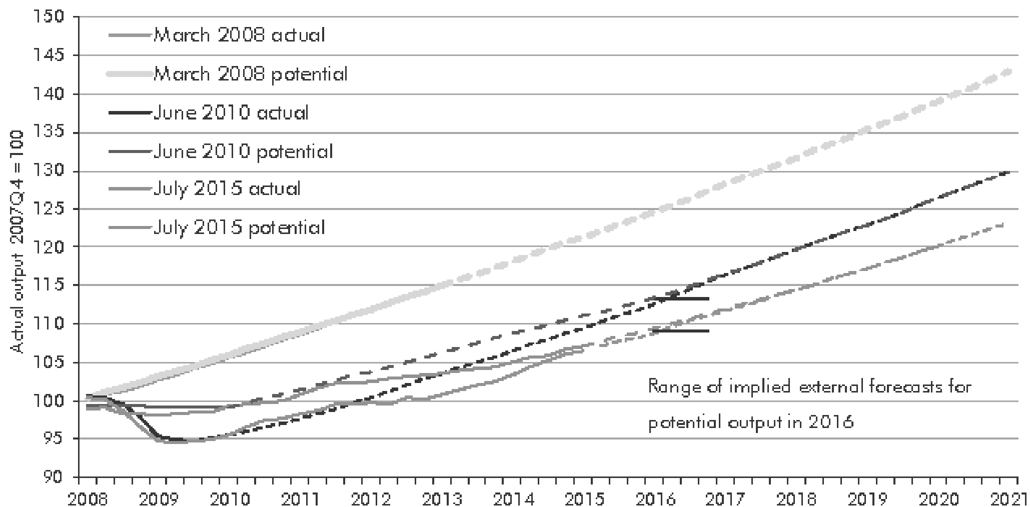
Chart 3.6: Potential output forecasts



Source: HM Treasury, ONS, OBR

Box 3.1: Employment and per capita GDP growth over the past five years

Between the first quarters of 2010 and 2015 the level of employment increased by 2.1 million, which was roughly double our June 2010 forecast. The additional 1 million reflected:

- 0.2 million of faster population growth, with around two-thirds of this due to higher net migration. This will understate the effect of higher net migration, since labour market data have yet to be fully aligned to the latest migration data;
- 0.2 million of lower unemployment. The June 2010 Budget forecast assumed a steady and gradual decline in the unemployment rate, but unemployment was initially higher before falling back more quickly; and
- 0.6 million due to a higher participation rate, which has essentially been flat rather than declining as first predicted.

Despite stronger employment growth, GDP per capita increased by only 6.1 per cent over those five years, well below the 10.6 per cent forecast in June 2010. That reflected the net effect of:

- a positive error of 2.6 percentage points due to the higher employment rate discussed above;
- an additional positive error of 2.1 percentage points due to higher average hours per worker; and
- a significant drag of 9.3 percentage points from much lower growth in productivity per hour (broadly matched by much weaker real earnings growth).

Judging when this pattern of strong employment growth and weak productivity (and real earnings) growth will come to an end remains the most important uncertainty in our economic

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forecast. Prospects for productivity growth are vital to the health of the public finances and to trends in living standards. We explore the economic and fiscal implications of different scenarios for employment and productivity growth in Chapter 5.

Key economy forecast assumptions

3.25 Our economic forecasts are conditioned on a number of assumptions. We use conditioning assumptions based on market expectations for domestic and international interest rates, the exchange rate, equity prices and oil prices. These market assumptions are all based on the 10-day average to 25 June 2015 so these will reflect perceived risks at that time, including risks related to negotiations between Greece and its creditors, to the extent that they influence observed prices. Risks to our forecasts are discussed further later in the chapter. We also base our forecasts on the Government's fiscal policy stance, including announcements in this Budget.

Monetary policy and credit conditions

3.26 Our forecast assumes that the Bank of England will try to bring inflation back to target over its forecast horizon, consistent with the remit the Chancellor has set the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC). In its May 2015 *Inflation Report*, the MPC forecast – on the basis of market interest rate expectations at the time – that CPI inflation would reach 2.00 per cent in the second quarter of 2017 and 2.14 per cent by early 2018. In terms of forward guidance on policy it stated that *"The MPC judges that it is currently appropriate to set policy so that it is likely inflation will return to the 2% target within two years. Conditional on Bank Rate following the path currently implied by market yields — such that it rises gradually over the forecast period — that is judged likely to be achieved"*. Our forecast implies a slower return of inflation to target – the reasons for this are explained in paragraph 3.60.

3.27 Like the Bank of England, our forecasts are conditioned on interest rates – including Bank Rate and gilt rates – following market expectations over the forecast period. Since our March forecast, medium-term interest rate expectations have risen slightly (Chart 3.7) but the first increase in Bank Rate is still expected in the second quarter of 2016. Bank Rate expectations are 0.3 percentage points higher than in March for the first quarter of 2020, reaching 2.1 per cent. Gilt rate expectations have also risen, while global bond yields are up more significantly, mainly due to euro area rates rebounding from historically low levels (Chart 3.8).

3.28 Domestic financial and credit market conditions have continued to ease, with the price of credit generally continuing to fall and volumes picking up. Bank funding spreads have continued to fall back towards pre-crisis levels and we assume that this easing in credit conditions continues gradually over the forecast period.

3.29 The effective mortgage rate is expected to continue falling in the near term due to lagged effects of past falls in funding spreads and as maturing mortgage contracts continue to

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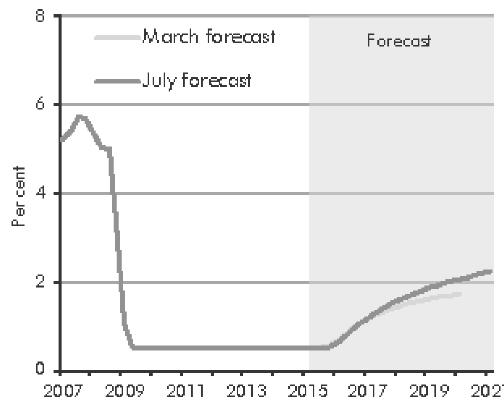
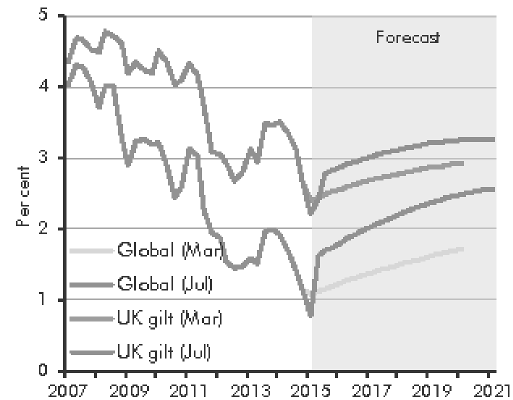
move onto lower new rates. Mortgage rates then rise slightly over the rest of the forecast period as increases in Bank Rate are largely offset by narrowing margins. We have not changed our assumption for the evolution of bank funding spreads or mortgage margins since March, so the change in our forecast for mortgage rates is driven by changes in Bank Rate expectations.

Chart 3.7: Bank Rate



Source: Bank of England, Datastream, OBR

Chart 3.8: Global bond yields



Note: 20-year gilts for UK, trade weighted bond rates for global.

3.30 Lending to households continues to pick up, mainly as rising house prices lead to more secured mortgage lending, which makes up the majority of household debt. But secured debt has not risen as much as house price and transaction growth would imply, as the share of cash transactions has increased. We expect growth in mortgage debt to rise fairly rapidly over the forecast period, as the share of cash transactions falls back towards its historical rate, house prices rise faster than incomes and transactions increase back towards their pre-crisis turnover rate. However, we have reduced the rate at which secured debt rises over the forecast period, the reasons for which are described in paragraph 3.86. Strong growth in car purchases has contributed to recent growth in unsecured lending, which in the first quarter of 2015 increased at its fastest rate since 2006.[5] We expect unsecured lending growth to continue to outpace incomes over the forecast period.

3.31 Bank lending to non-financial companies remains subdued, having generally fallen on an annual basis since the financial crisis. Large companies have been able to raise funds through non-bank sources, as favourable wholesale market conditions have encouraged strong net issuance of bonds. Lending to SMEs has also fallen on an annual basis, but unlike large companies, SMEs do not have access to wholesale markets, so restricted credit availability has hit smaller firms harder. There have been recent signs of improvement, with annual growth in lending to SMEs turning positive in April 2015, for the first time since 2009.

[5] Car leasing arrangements, which are becoming a more popular way of purchasing cars, are classified as unsecured lending.

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Fiscal policy and Budget measures

3.32 Fiscal policy has been tightened in every year since 2010-11, when the then Labour Government reversed its temporary crisis-related fiscal stimulus. The Coalition Government increased the pace of discretionary fiscal tightening in the last Parliament. The new Conservative Government has now eased the pace of fiscal consolidation over the next three years, and also changed its composition significantly relative to the fiscal policy assumptions that underpinned our March forecast. In Box 3.2 we set out the fiscal multiplier framework that we use to estimate the overall effect of changes in fiscal policy on the economy. In Box 3.3, we then describe how our current forecast has been affected by the fiscal and other policy changes announced in this Budget that we consider sufficiently material to warrant an explicit adjustment to our economy forecast.

Box 3.2: Fiscal multipliers

In June 2010, the interim OBR estimated the impact that the additional fiscal tightening announced in the Coalition's first Budget would have on growth through the use of 'fiscal multipliers'. These implied that a discretionary tightening of 1 per cent of GDP would, in the first instance, reduce output by 1 per cent in the case of investment cuts; 0.6 per cent in the case of cuts to day to day public services and welfare spending; 0.35 for VAT increases; and 0.3 per cent for income tax and NICs increases. The multiplier was assumed to diminish or taper over five years, as the initial effect was offset by changes in monetary policy, the exchange rate and real wage adjustments.

In this forecast, we have applied the same real multipliers that the interim OBR used in the June 2010 forecast. But we have adjusted the way in which we apply them in two ways:

- in June 2010 the interim OBR assumed that the multipliers would taper from the point of implementation. This implied that changes to the fiscal consolidation path taking effect later in the forecast period would not be offset by monetary policy or other factors until sometime after their implementation. This was consistent with a significant degree of spare capacity being expected to persist over the forecast period, limiting the scope of monetary policy and other factors to offset them. With our current estimate of spare capacity significantly smaller, and expected to close within the forecast horizon, it seems more likely now that the demand impact of pre-announced changes to tax and spending would be partly or wholly offset. We have therefore assumed that the multipliers taper from the point of announcement, rather than the point of implementation; and
- in applying multipliers to changes in taxes or spending, it is also important to consider whether the effect on nominal GDP (the nominal multiplier) may differ from the effect on real GDP (the real multiplier). We judge that this is likely to be the case for day to day spending on public services, which is broadly equivalent to government consumption in the expenditure measure of GDP and is subject to the 'resource departmental expenditure limits' (RDEL) set out by the Treasury. Changes in the cash level of RDEL spending affect the implied price of government consumption in the National Accounts, partly via real world changes to the price of procurement and partly via statistical effects, notably the

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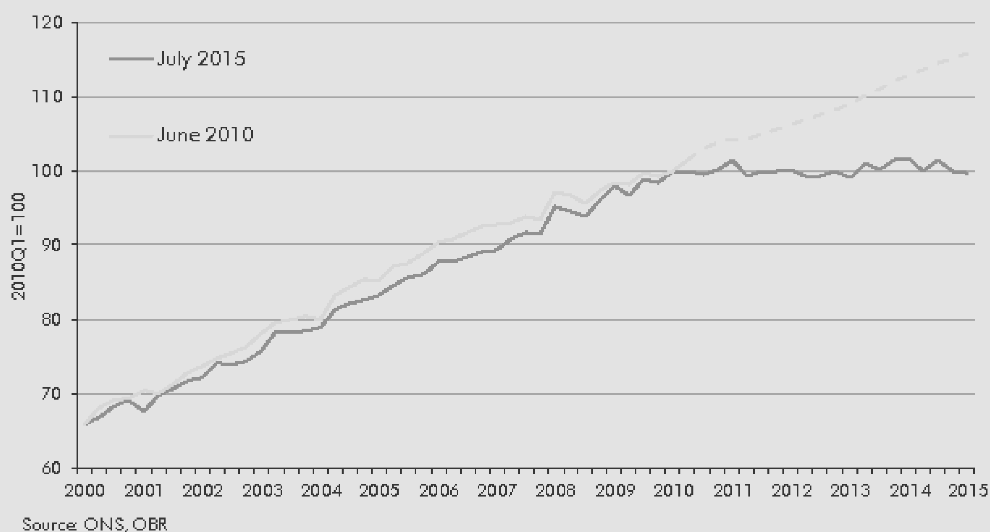
way in which the direct measures of output for some public services are not affected by changes in cash spending (e.g. the number of pupils taught is driven by demography, not cash spending). As a result, the effective nominal multiplier for RDEL will generally be larger than the real multiplier. In June 2010, the interim OBR assumed that around a quarter of changes to RDEL would affect the implicit price of government consumption through the real-world procurement price channel. A multiplier of 0.6 was then applied to the remaining three quarters of the change in RDEL, implying an effective real multiplier of around 0.45. In the event, much more of the squeeze on RDEL spending since 2010 has shown up as weaker growth in the measured price of public services than weaker growth in volumes, as shown in Chart A. As a result, we overestimated the extent to which the cuts in RDEL spending would act as a direct drag on measured real GDP growth.

Chart A: The government consumption deflator



Source: ONS, OBR

Reflecting this experience, in this forecast we have applied the same effective real RDEL multiplier that the interim OBR used in June 2010, but we now assume that around two-thirds of nominal RDEL changes are reflected in the government consumption deflator. This implies a higher effective multiplier for the effect of RDEL changes on nominal GDP (as measured) of 1.1. The results of applying this approach to the changes to the path of consolidation announced in this Budget are set out in Box 3.3.

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Box 3.3: The economic effects of policy measures

This box considers the possible effects on the economy of the policy measures announced in this Budget. More details of each measure are set out in the Treasury's Budget document. Our assessment of their fiscal implications can be found in Chapter 4 and Annex A.

The Government has announced significant changes to the pace and composition of the **fiscal consolidation**. Resource departmental expenditure limits (RDELs) have been cut slightly this year, but are then significantly higher over the remainder of the forecast than in March: by around £17 billion in 2016-17, £27 billion in 2017-18, £28 billion in 2018-19 and £12 billion in 2019-20. This additional spending is partly offset by cuts to welfare spending (AME) and net tax increases, but is also financed by higher government borrowing through to 2018-19.

In order to reflect these changes in our economic forecast, we have applied multipliers to them, as described in Box 3.2. This leads to a downward adjustment to real GDP growth of 0.1 percentage points in 2015-16 and an upward adjustment of 0.2 percentage points in 2016-17. Changes to the fiscal path in later years have negligible effects on real GDP growth, as the multipliers are assumed to diminish over time. The direct effect of changes in RDEL on the GDP deflator – via the government consumption deflator – means that the effects on nominal GDP growth are larger and more persistent. They imply an adjustment to nominal growth of -0.2 percentage points in 2015-16; 1.0 percentage points in 2016-17; 0.3 percentage points in 2017-18; -0.1 percentage points in 2018-19 and -0.6 percentage points in 2019-20.

The Government's decision to introduce a **Living Wage Premium** on top of the National Minimum Wage has led us to make a number of small adjustments to our forecasts of employment, average hours, wages and inflation. Annex B sets out further details of these judgements. In aggregate we have made a small downward revision to the level of potential output – and therefore real GDP – of around 0.1 per cent by the end of the forecast period.

The Government has announced significant cuts to **welfare spending**. This includes a four-year freeze to working-age benefits, and other cuts to tax credits, universal credit and housing benefit, including a reduction in payments resulting from requiring social sector landlords to reduce rents. We estimate the direct effect of the welfare cuts on overall aggregate demand by applying the appropriate multiplier to the total change in AME spending. But these measures may also affect work incentives and therefore potential labour supply. Given that the package includes cuts to both in-work income and out-of-work income, we have not adjusted our labour supply forecasts for these measures. But there is clearly a risk that the net effect of these measures on labour supply is not neutral.

The Government's decision to impose 1 per cent annual rent reductions in the social rented sector for four years from April 2016 will directly reduce social landlords' rental income, and therefore their financing for, and returns to, investing in new **housebuilding**. To reflect this we have reduced our forecast for residential investment, proportionate to the expected reduction in rental income. This reduces private residential investment by around 0.7 per cent by the end of the forecast period. Around 37,000 'affordable homes' were built by Housing Associations in England in 2013-14.[a] The adjustment would be broadly consistent with reducing housebuilding by housing associations by around 4,000 in 2019-20, when the full effect of the policy on their

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rental income has been reached. Over the forecast period, our assumptions suggest around 14,000 fewer 'affordable homes' will be built.

The Government has announced a number of measures that are expected to affect the cost of capital faced by firms, and therefore the level of **business investment.** These include: a reduction in the main rate of corporation tax from 20 per cent to 19 per cent in 2017-18 and a further reduction to 18 per cent in 2020-21; a permanent increase in the annual investment allowance (AIA) to £200,000 from January 2016, from its previous permanent level of £25,000; and the introduction of a supplementary tax on banking sector profits set at 8 per cent from January 2016. The net effect of these measures is to increase the level of business investment by around 0.6 per cent by the end of the forecast period. The bringing forward of quarterly corporation tax payments for large companies will have an effect on companies' cash flow in 2017. As larger companies are more likely to have access to a range of funding sources, we do not expect this to have a significant effect on business investment.

This Budget includes a number of policies that we expect to have an impact on **inflation**. These are generally small and offsetting, with the level of prices at the end of the forecast little changed. The largest impacts that we incorporated into the forecast come from the forced cuts in social rents, which are expected to lower CPI inflation by up to 0.1 percentage points from 2016-17 to 2019-20, and the change in vehicle excise duty (VED) rates, which we expect to increase CPI inflation by around 0.1 percentage point in 2017-18 and have smaller effects thereafter. An increase in the rate of insurance premium tax (IPT) and the introduction of the Living Wage Premium are expected to lead to small increases in inflation. The changes in the VED and IPT rates we incorporated into the economy forecast are different to the final policy decisions. We also incorporated a tobacco measure that did not go ahead. The Government informed us of changes to these policies after the deadline for including them in our final economy forecast. Incorporating the final design of these policy changes would have had less than a 0.1 percentage point impact on our inflation forecast.

There are a number of measures that could affect the **housing market**. The introduction of a 'main residence nil rate band' in the inheritance tax regime is likely to increase the incentives for housing purchases and to discourage individuals from selling their homes. On the other hand, the restriction in mortgage interest rate relief to the basic rate is likely to reduce returns to buy-to-let property. Overall, we estimate that these measures will have small and offsetting effects, and so we have not adjusted our forecast for house prices. Changes to the inheritance tax regime could make it more likely that the co-existence of under-occupation among older owners and over-crowding among younger renters will become even more prevalent. It is not clear to what extent that might affect regional labour mobility or other issues relevant to our macroeconomic forecast, so we have not made any adjustments on account of this.

[a] DCLG, Live Table 1000: *Additional affordable homes provided by type of scheme, England.*

World economy

3.33 We expect world GDP to grow by 3.2 per cent in 2015, down from a forecast of 3.5 per cent in March. Compared with our March forecast, world GDP growth is slightly higher in 2016 but slightly lower from 2017 onwards. The main news since March has been weaker

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than expected US GDP growth in the first quarter of 2015, the intensification of the Greek debt crisis and the publication of the IMF's April 2015 *World economic outlook (WEO)* forecasts that inform our world GDP forecast.

3.34 The euro area economy appears to have benefitted from the fall in the global oil price and the European Central Bank's quantitative easing programme. In the first quarter of 2015, euro area GDP was up 1.0 per cent on a year earlier, compared with an average four-quarter growth rate of -0.1 per cent over the past three years. In the year to the first quarter, GDP was up 1.0 per cent in Germany, 0.7 per cent in France, and 0.1 per cent in Italy. Spain saw stronger growth of 2.7 per cent. We forecast euro area GDP growth of 1.5 per cent in 2015, slightly higher than our March forecast, and we expect growth to average a little over 1½ per cent a year thereafter.

3.35 This forecast assumes no material disruption from ongoing negotiations over Greece's debt obligations and the outcome of the referendum in Greece that was taking place on the day that we completed this document. Greece accounts for only 0.6 per cent of UK exports, so the direct channel of risk is limited, but any spillover to the wider euro area could be much more significant, as witnessed between 2010 and 2012. The euro area accounts for 40 per cent of UK exports, so a fall in imports among euro area countries could have a material impact on UK firms. A more widespread deterioration in risk sentiment triggered by developments in Greece could affect global financial markets and banking systems.

3.36 Deflation in the euro area remains a risk to the global and UK outlook, although the latest data show tentative signs of rising consumer prices. Euro area CPI inflation was positive in May, the first positive monthly reading since November 2014. CPI inflation moderated slightly in June, but remained in positive territory. Core inflation was 0.9 per cent in May, but also fell slightly in June. Unemployment was 11.1 per cent in May, unchanged from April and continuing a path of steady decline. Weaker growth, lower inflation and monetary policy easing has helped to push the euro to multi-year lows in relation to sterling and the US dollar this year.

3.37 US GDP fell slightly in the first quarter of 2015, with net trade a significant drag on growth. Bad weather and lower investment in the oil extraction sector were also thought to have contributed to this weakness. The OECD's May 2015 *Economic outlook* forecast US GDP growth to be 2.0 per cent in 2015 as a whole, down from 3.1 per cent in November, although that forecast was based on a lower previous estimate for the first quarter.

World trade

3.38 We expect world trade to grow by 4.1 per cent in 2015, slightly higher than we forecast in March. World trade growth has been revised down in each subsequent year of the forecast

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and by a greater amount than world GDP growth. That is consistent with the IMF's downward revisions to world trade growth in its April *WEO*, which were broad-based.[6]

3.39 UK export markets are expected to grow by 3.2 per cent in 2015, below our March forecast. We also expect UK export markets to grow at a slower rate from 2016 onwards. These downward revisions are driven by – and of a similar magnitude to – the revisions to world trade growth.

Other conditioning assumptions

3.40 We assume that the exchange rate follows the path implied by the uncovered interest parity condition. Sterling is stronger than in March, although it is still expected to depreciate over the forecast period as the forward UK interest rate curve is above the average of the UK's major trading partners (Chart 3.9). We assume equity prices rise in line with nominal GDP from their current level. The FTSE all-share index has risen by slightly less than assumed in March (Chart 3.10).

Chart 3.9: Sterling effective exchange rate assumption

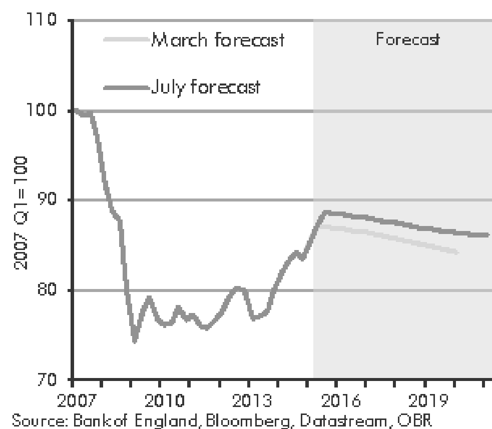
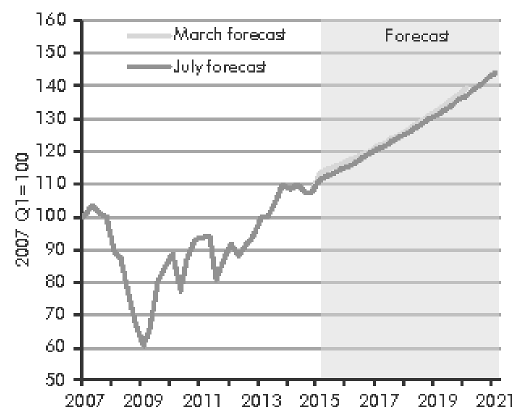


Chart 3.10: Equity prices assumption



Source: Bank of England, Bloomberg, Datastream, OBR

Summary

3.41 To summarise, the key assumptions underpinning our central forecast are that:

- monetary policy remains very loose and does not begin to tighten until the second quarter of 2016;
- fiscal consolidation continues to depress the level of GDP, while acting as less of a drag on growth than over the past four years;

[6] Further information on the rationale for the IMF's revisions to the trade intensity of world GDP growth were set out in Box 1.2 of the April 2015 WEO.

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- the gentler pace of fiscal consolidation and the measures announced in the Budget raise real and nominal GDP growth in the short term, but have a small downward effect on the level of real GDP in the longer term. Policy decisions also have small impacts on CPI inflation, which offset each other by the end of the forecast period;
- credit conditions and the financial system continue to normalise gradually; and
- global activity and demand for UK exports pick up steadily, albeit slightly more slowly in the near term than expected in March. In the euro area, negotiations over Greece's debt obligations do not result in materially damaging effects on GDP growth.

3.42 Risks and uncertainties associated with these assumptions and other facets of the forecast are discussed later in the chapter.

Prospects for real GDP growth

3.43 In this section, we set out the expected path of GDP growth over the forecast period. We first consider the short-term outlook, based on recent economic data and forward-looking surveys. We then consider the rate at which GDP will grow over the medium term as spare capacity is put to productive use and the relatively small negative output gap closes.

The short-term outlook for GDP

3.44 The ONS has revised up its estimate of GDP growth in 2014 to 3.0 per cent from the 2.6 per cent estimated in March. It is now in line with our December 2014 forecast.

3.45 On a monthly basis, Chart 3.11 shows steady contributions to growth from the services sector in 2014, but contributions from that sector were lower in the early months of 2015. Contributions from the construction and production sectors were more volatile in 2014 and that has continued into 2015.

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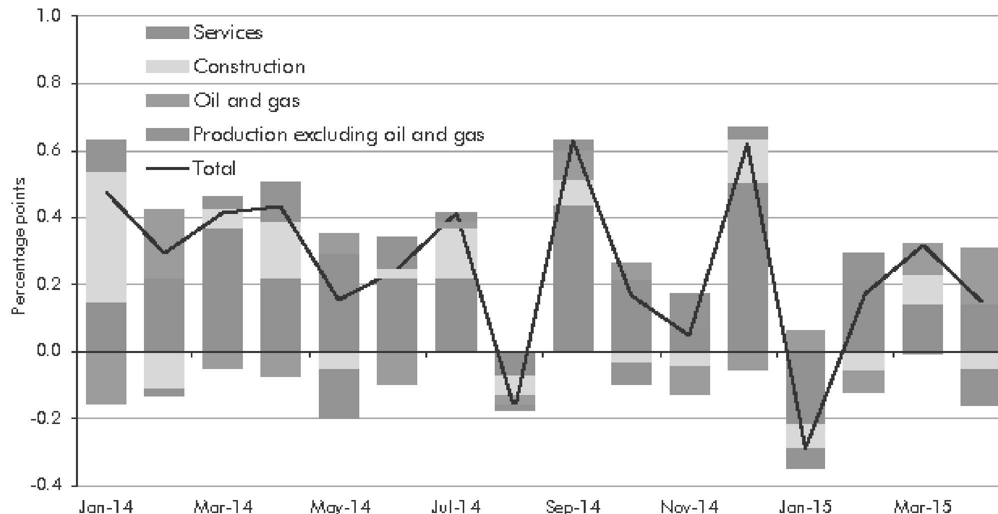
Chart 3.11: Contributions to monthly output growth



Source: ONS

3.46 In the first quarter of 2015, GDP is estimated to have increased by 0.4 per cent on the previous quarter. That is below the 0.7 per cent we forecast in March and down from 0.8 per cent in the final quarter of 2014. The lower contribution from the services sector was a key reason behind this lower growth.

3.47 Survey data have shown a mixed picture in the second quarter. The Markit/CIPS *Purchasing Managers' Index* (PMIs) for the services sector has been higher on average than in the first quarter, but the PMIs for the manufacturing and construction sectors have been lower on average. The latest ONS data for the second quarter also showed services output increasing but manufacturing and construction output falling in April.

3.48 We expect GDP growth to pick up to 0.6 per cent in the second and third quarters, unchanged from our March forecast. We expect that the in-year cuts to public spending announced in June will affect the economy late in the fiscal year and have assumed the effects will be sufficient to push quarterly GDP growth down to 0.5 per cent in the final quarter of 2015 and first quarter of 2016. These changes leave GDP growth in 2015 as a whole at 2.4 per cent, slightly below our March forecast and largely reflecting the weaker than expected first quarter data.

3.49 While fiscal policy is expected to be tighter in 2016-17 than in 2015-16, the pace of tightening has been eased substantially relative to our March forecast. We have assumed this will add around 0.2 percentage points to annual GDP growth in 2016-17, sufficient to lift quarterly growth to 0.7 per cent in the second and third quarters of 2016. That leaves GDP growth in 2016 at 2.3 per cent, unchanged since March.

Table 3.2: The quarterly GDP profile

	Percentage change on previous quarter											
	2014				2015				2016			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
July forecast[1]	0.9	0.9	0.7	0.8	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.6
March forecast[2]	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6
Change[3]	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.3	-0.3	0.0	0.0	-0.1	-0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0

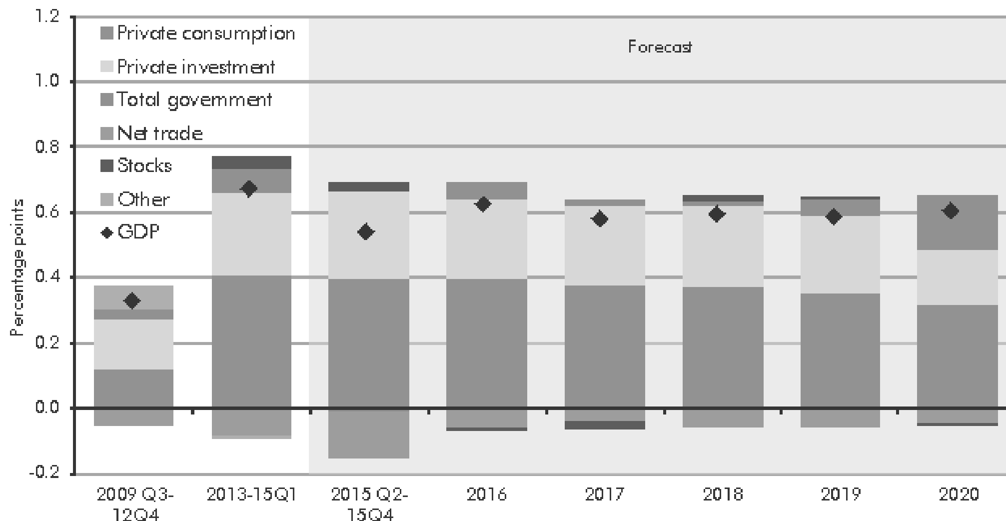
[1] Forecast from second quarter of 2015.
[2] Forecast from first quarter of 2015.
[3] Changes may not sum due to rounding.

The medium-term outlook

3.50 Our forecasts for growth in the medium term are determined by the amount of spare capacity in the economy, and the speed with which we expect it to return to productive use. The prospects for monetary policy, fiscal policy, credit conditions, external demand and financial markets discussed in the previous section all inform that judgement.

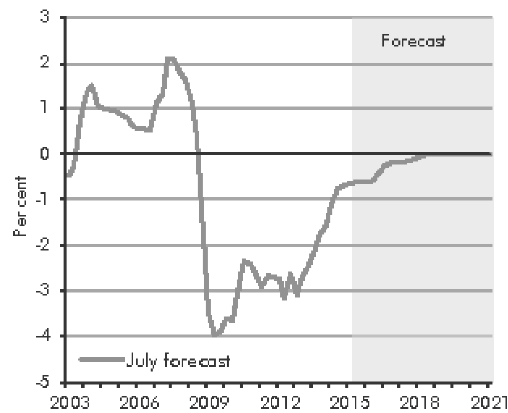
3.51 While fiscal policy changes have caused us to revise our quarterly GDP forecast since March, the main factors and judgements underpinning the path of GDP over the coming years are little changed. The fall in the oil price since mid-2014 supports households' real income and spending this year. As the effect dissipates from 2016, real income growth is expected to be supported by a gradual improvement in underlying productivity growth, with the output gap narrowing slowly and GDP growth close to trend rates from 2017. As Chart 3.12 shows, we expect private consumption and investment to account for almost all GDP growth while the fiscal consolidation continues, but the balance between private and government sources of GDP growth to shift from 2020. Charts 3.13 and 3.14 show how these medium-term forecasts translate in terms of the output gap and the levels of actual and potential output.

Chart 3.12: Contributions to average quarterly GDP growth



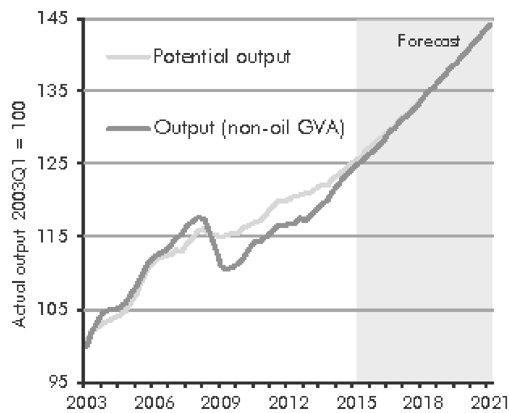
Note: 'Other' category includes the statistical discrepancy and the residual between GDP and the expenditure components prior to the base year (2011).
Source: ONS, OBR

Chart 3.13: The output gap



Note: Output gap estimates on a quarterly basis, based on the latest National Accounts data and expressed as actual output less trend output as a percentage of trend output (non-oil basis).
Source: OBR

Chart 3.14: Projections of actual and potential output



Source: ONS, OBR

3.52 Table 3.3 summarises the expenditure composition of our real GDP forecast. Relative to March, we expect a weaker contribution from net trade in 2015, which is only partially offset by stronger contributions from consumption and investment. In 2016, the GDP growth forecast is broadly unchanged, with a larger contribution from government spending offsetting a slightly weaker contribution from consumption. From 2017 onwards, business

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investment makes stronger contributions to GDP growth than in our March forecast, while the contributions from residential investment are somewhat weaker.

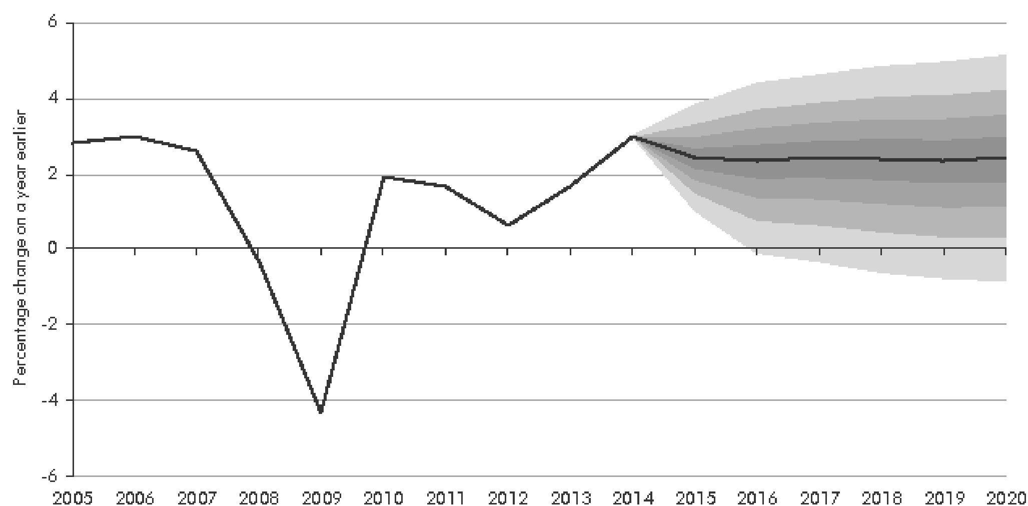
Table 3.3: Expenditure contributions to growth

	Percentage points, unless otherwise stated						
	Outturn	Forecast					
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
GDP growth (per cent)	3.0	2.4	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4
Main contributions							
Private consumption	1.6	1.9	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.3
Business investment	0.8	0.6	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.6
Dwellings investment[1]	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Government[2]	0.4	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.5
Change in inventories	0.3	-0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Net trade	-0.6	-0.5	-0.4	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2

[1] The sum of public corporations and private sector investment in new dwellings, improvements to dwellings and transfer costs.
[2] The sum of government consumption and general government investment.
Note: Components may not sum to total due to rounding and the statistical discrepancy.

3.53 Our central GDP growth forecast is shown in Chart 3.15. The distribution surrounding it shows the probability of different outcomes based on past forecast accuracy. The solid black line shows our median forecast, with successive pairs of lighter shaded areas around it representing 20 per cent probability bands. These are based on the historical distribution of official forecast errors. They do not represent a subjective measure of the distribution of risks around the central forecast. Such risks are discussed at the end of the chapter.

Chart 3.15: Real GDP growth fan chart



Source: ONS, OBR

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Prospects for inflation

3.54 In assessing the outlook for the economy and the public finances, we are interested in a number of measures of inflation, including the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) and the Retail Prices Index (RPI). The basic measurement approach is the same in both indices, although there are a number of differences in coverage and the methods used to construct them (see Box 3.3 of the March 2015 *EFO* for details). We also forecast the GDP deflator and its components, which are used in generating our nominal GDP forecast.

3.55 The CPI and RPI measures of inflation are important because they both affect our fiscal forecast. The Government uses the CPI for the indexation of many tax rates, allowances and thresholds, and for the uprating of benefits and public sector pensions. The RPI is used to calculate interest payments on index-linked gilts, student loan payments and the revalorisation of excise duties. The ONS publishes other inflation measures, but these do not currently affect the public finances, so we do not forecast them.

CPI inflation

3.56 Annual CPI inflation was 0.1 per cent in the first quarter of 2015, in line with our March forecast. Inflation fell to -0.1 per cent in April, which is estimated to have been the first negative reading since March 1960. It bounced back to 0.1 per cent in May. Most of the present difference from the Bank of England's 2 per cent target is due to external factors, including recent falls in global commodity prices and the appreciation of sterling. However, domestic factors have also played a part, with subdued growth in wages bearing down on unit labour cost growth and competition in the supermarket sector compressing margins.

3.57 On a quarterly basis, inflation is expected to have troughed at -0.1 per cent in the second quarter of 2015. We expect inflation to increase relatively sharply at the end of 2015 and start of 2016, as the direct impact of recent falls in energy prices drop out of the year on year calculation.

3.58 Inflation is then forecast to return slowly towards the Bank of England's 2 per cent target. We expect there to be a number of competing forces at play:

- increases in wage growth (discussed further below) should result in growth in unit labour costs returning towards rates more consistent with historical norms, putting upward pressure on prices;
- the effects of the recent sterling appreciation will continue to bear down on the price of items that have a high import content, as movements in the exchange rate take time to be reflected first in import prices and then to feed through to consumer prices; and
- the effects of the recent falls in commodity prices will continue to feed through with lags. Utility firms buy wholesale energy up to two years in advance, so the recent falls in wholesale gas prices will continue to affect retail energy prices for some time. The fall in the oil price will also continue to make its way through supply chains with lags.

3.59 We have adjusted our inflation forecast for the policy decisions announced in the Budget:

- the Government's decision to reduce rents in the social-rented sector by 1 per cent a year for four years from April 2016 is expected to lower CPI inflation by up to 0.1 percentage point a year;
- we incorporated an increase in the rate of insurance premium tax (IPT) and a tobacco measure that we expected to increase CPI inflation by less than 0.1 percentage point. However, the Government's final policy decisions included a slightly higher increase in IPT, but did not include the tobacco measure. We were informed of these changes after we had closed the final economy forecast;
- changes to the vehicle excise duty (VED) system are expected to result in an initial increase in CPI inflation of 0.1 percentage point over 2017-18, when the higher rates apply to new cars. There is expected to be a smaller impact on inflation in subsequent years as the stock of cars slowly rolls over onto the new standard rate system. The VED rates we incorporated into the economy forecast are different to the final policy decision, because the Government informed us of a change to the policy after our deadline for including it in our final economy forecast. Incorporating the final design of the policy change would probably have resulted in a smaller initial impact and a larger subsequent impact on CPI inflation, although any difference would be less than 0.1 percentage point; and
- the Living Wage Premium is expected to increase the level of the CPI by around 0.1 percentage point over the forecast period, as some of higher wage costs faced by firms are passed on to households. The effect on annual CPI inflation is therefore expected to be very small.

3.60 The net effect of these measures is broadly offsetting, with the level of prices at the end of the forecast period little changed. But taken together, these factors mean that inflation is not expected to return to 2.0 per cent until mid-2020, although it is close to target at 1.8 or 1.9 per cent from 2018. The lagged effects of sterling appreciation and commodity price falls are outside the control of the MPC and are not expected to affect medium-term inflation expectations or wage settlements – so we would not expect them to elicit a monetary policy response. The social rent policy, which affects inflation until the second quarter of 2020, is a temporary change in the growth of an administered price, so we expect the MPC would look through its effects. These are the main reasons for the slow return of inflation to target in our forecast. The CPI inflation forecast is similar to March, with only small movements in oil prices and the exchange rate, as well as policy measures, moving our forecast.

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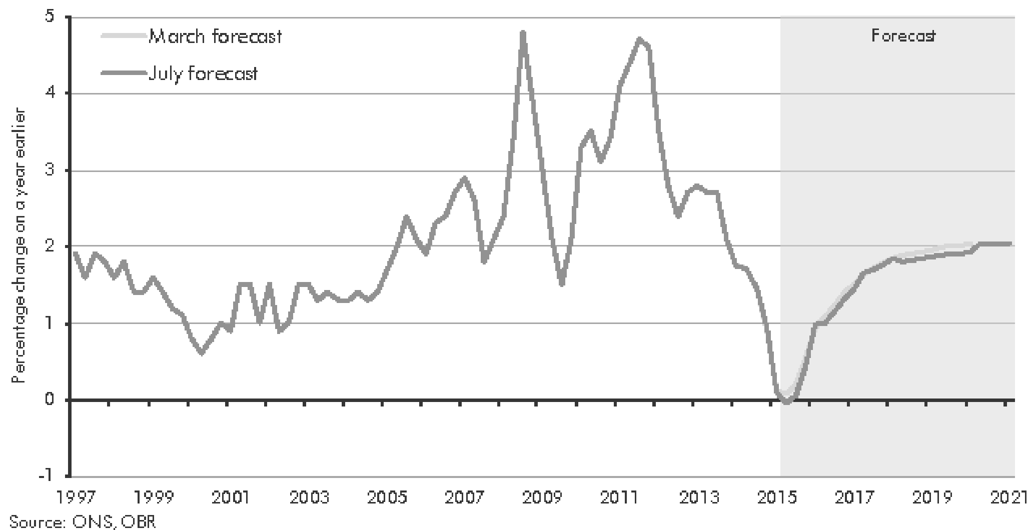
Chart 3.16: CPI inflation



Source: ONS, OBR

RPI inflation

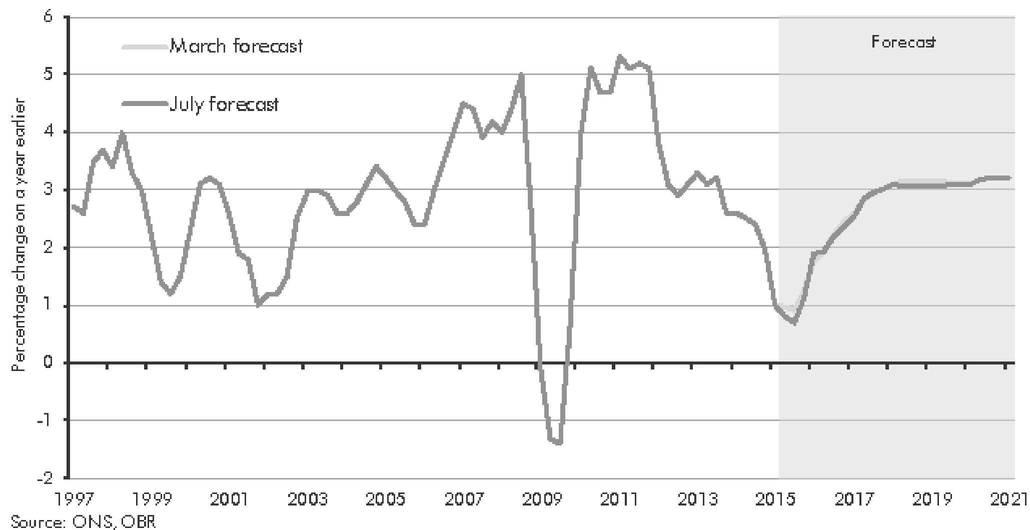
3.61 The calculation of RPI inflation in the UK does not meet international statistical standards,[7] but we continue to forecast it as it remains an input in our fiscal forecasts – notably as a determinant of the interest paid on the large stock of index-linked gilts.

3.62 RPI inflation was 1.0 per cent in the first quarter of 2015, in line with our March forecast. We expect RPI inflation to trough at 0.7 per cent in the middle of 2015, before rising initially in line with CPI inflation. Higher mortgage interest payments (MIPs) are then expected to push RPI inflation above 3 per cent. The rise in MIPs is driven by an increase in mortgage debt as housing market turnover increases back towards its pre-crisis average and as the effective mortgage interest rate stops falling. This RPI forecast is little changed since March.

3.63 The RPI profile has also been adjusted for the policy measures announced in the Budget and discussed above. The main difference from the CPI impacts is that the insurance premium tax measure has a slightly higher impact on RPI inflation as it has a higher weight.

[7] ONS, *Response to the National Statistician's consultation on options for improving the Retail Prices Index*, February 2013.

Chart 3.17: RPI inflation



Source: ONS, OBR

The GDP deflator

3.64 GDP deflator growth is the broadest measure of inflation in the domestic economy. It measures changes in prices of the goods and services that make up GDP, including price movements in private and government consumption, investment and the relative price of exports and imports – the terms of trade.

3.65 As described in Chapter 2, there was broad-based weakness in the GDP deflator relative to our March forecast in the first quarter of 2015, which carries through to weaker near term annual growth (Chart 3.18).

3.66 The profile for GDP deflator growth in the medium term has changed significantly since our March forecast, thanks to a very different profile for growth in the price of government consumption. This reflects Government decisions to change the pace and composition of fiscal consolidation. The easing in the pace of consolidation in 2016-17 and 2017-18 results in much faster growth in the implied price of government consumption in those years. Extending the period of consolidation by a year has also reduced government consumption growth in 2019-20, implying weaker growth in the government consumption deflator in that year than we forecast in March. We forecast a larger rise in GDP deflator growth in 2020-21, when the Government's fiscal plans imply government consumption will grow rapidly. But we have reduced the extent to which that feeds through mechanically to the GDP deflator, effectively placing more weight on a top-down judgement about the steady-state rate of GDP deflator growth.

3.67 In our 2015 *Fiscal sustainability report (FSR)* we revised up our long-run assumption for growth in the GDP deflator to 2.3 per cent to take into account new residential investment

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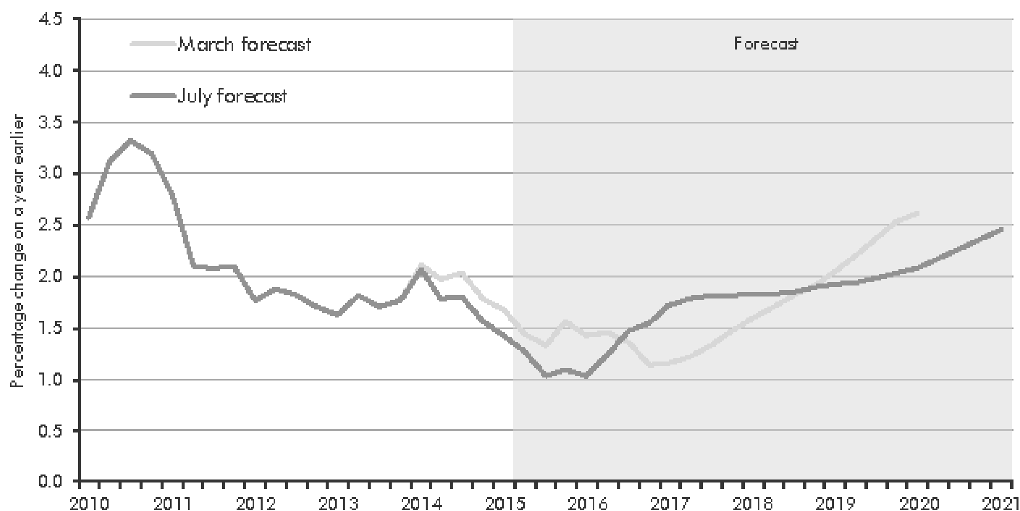
prices growing in line with average earnings. At the end of our forecast period, despite making the top-down judgement mentioned above, GDP deflator growth is 2.5 per cent. This is above our long-run assumption because:

- we have a positive wedge between the consumption deflator and the CPI due to the inclusion of imputed rent, which we assume grows in line with average earnings. We do not model this explicitly in the long run, since the approach to measuring an imputed activity should not affect tax receipts or spending in the long term; and
- in our medium-term forecast, the terms of trade increase gradually. This is because we assume that services prices grow faster than goods prices, as has historically been the case. As the UK exports more services than it imports, export prices are expected to grow faster in the medium term. In the long run we assume a flat terms of trade.

Chart 3.18: GDP deflator



Source: ONS, OBR

Prospects for nominal GDP growth

3.68 Most public discussion of economic forecasts focuses on real GDP – the volume of goods and services produced in the economy. But the nominal or cash value of GDP – and its composition by income and expenditure – is more important in understanding the behaviour of the public finances. Taxes are driven more by nominal than real GDP. So too is the share of GDP devoted to public spending, as a large proportion of that spending is set out in multi-year cash plans (public services and administration) or linked to measures of inflation (benefits, tax credits and interest on index-linked gilts).

3.69 Recent data indicate that nominal GDP grew by 0.7 per cent in the first quarter of 2015. Looking at income this reflected relatively strong rates of growth in corporate profits, offset

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by weaker growth in labour income, while looking at expenditure it reflected strong growth in private investment offset by a negative net trade contribution. We expect nominal GDP growth to fall back from 4.6 per cent in 2014 to 3.5 per cent in 2015, largely due to relatively weak rates of growth at the start of the year. From 2016 we expect nominal GDP growth to pick up steadily, as real GDP growth stabilises, CPI inflation moves back towards target and nominal government consumption growth picks up in 2020. We expect nominal GDP to grow by a cumulative 23.8 per cent between the fourth quarter of 2014 and the first quarter of 2020 – around 1.2 percentage points less than we expected in March. Of this, around 0.9 percentage points is accounted for by weaker-than-expected nominal GDP growth in the first quarter of 2015. Changes to the path of government consumption resulting from the Government's decisions on the pace and composition of fiscal consolidation add 0.6 percentage points to cumulative nominal GDP growth relative to our March forecast, offset by weaker contributions from private consumption and investment.

3.70 Within the expenditure components of nominal GDP, private consumption is expected to be the largest contributor to growth over the forecast period, consistent with its relative share of GDP. The relatively slow growth of household income growth means that we expect the share of consumption to remain broadly stable between 2015 and 2020, while the share of private investment in nominal GDP increases from 15.3 to 17.6 per cent over the same period, offsetting a fall in government consumption and investment from 21.3 per cent to 19.0 per cent. Within income, we expect profit margins to recover slightly in the near term, while the share of labour income in nominal GDP is expected to remain broadly stable from 2016.

Prospects for individual sectors of the economy

The household sector

3.71 The household sector is the largest source of income and spending in the economy, with consumer spending making up 65 per cent of nominal GDP by expenditure and household disposable income making up 64 per cent of nominal GDP by income in 2014.

Real consumer spending

3.72 Consumption growth was 2.5 per cent in real terms in 2014 and 0.9 per cent in the first quarter of 2015. We forecast it to grow by 3.0 per cent in 2015 as a whole. We assume that real consumption will grow broadly in line with real wages over the forecast period, having risen faster than real wages in each year since 2010 (Chart 3.19).

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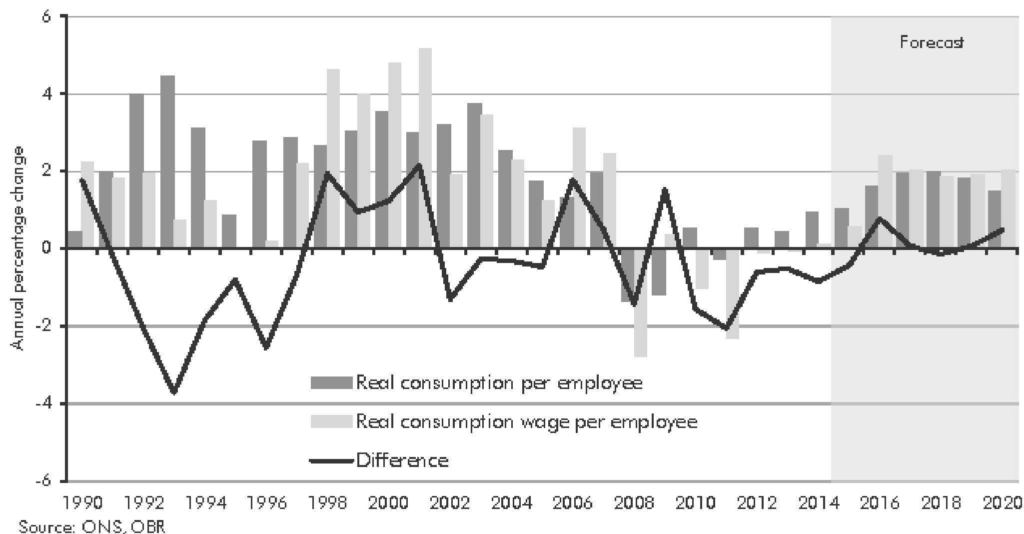
Chart 3.19: Real consumption wage and real consumption



Source: ONS, OBR

The labour market and household income

3.73 The unemployment rate has fallen steadily over recent quarters, reaching 5.5 per cent in the first quarter of 2015. We expect the rate of decline to ease over coming quarters as GDP growth stabilises and productivity growth picks up, allowing firms to expand output through their existing workforce rather than through recruitment. But the recovery in productivity per worker is likely to be gradual, and we expect sufficient momentum in the labour market for the unemployment rate to drop below its equilibrium level through 2016.

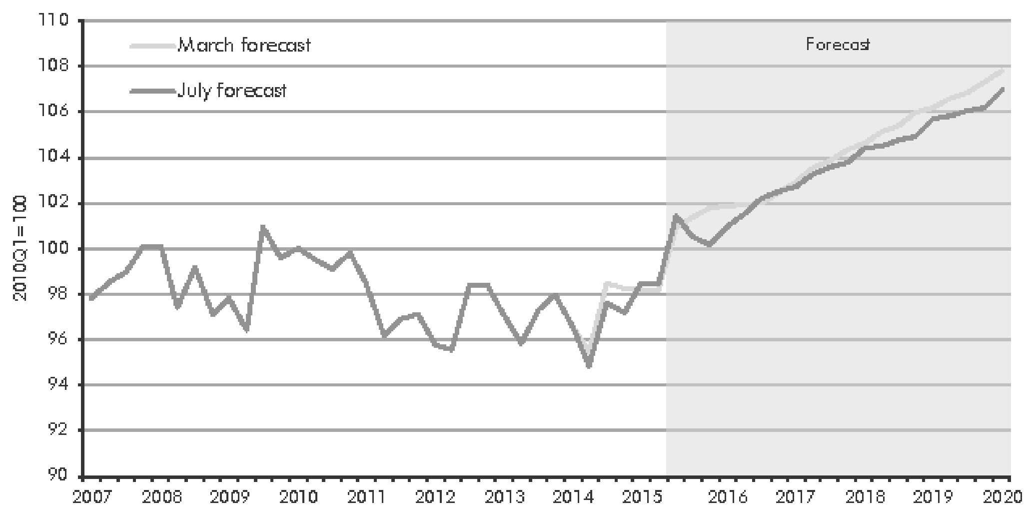
3.74 The headline unemployment rate is then forecast to rise gradually from 2017, first closing the gap relative to the structural rate, and then rising alongside it as an increasing Living Wage Premium puts slight upward pressure on unemployment. We also expect the participation rate to decline marginally over the next five years, so that the employment rate ends the period at a lower level than it stands today. The 1.1 million rise in employment over the forecast period can therefore be more than explained by additional population growth, although within this we do expect employment rates to rise among older age groups.

3.75 The measure of average earnings growth we forecast – based on the National Accounts – is currently estimated to have fallen by 0.9 per cent in the first quarter of 2015, even as the headline average weekly earnings (AWE) measure picked up. The National Accounts uses AWE data (until administrative tax data become available), so in principle the two should be consistent, but the aggregation process and other factors can lead to differences. One consequence of the weak start to the year in the National Accounts measure is that our 2015 estimate of earnings growth has been revised down slightly, but this masks stronger underlying momentum.

3.76 The AWE figures have gathered pace since March, particularly within the private sector. This appears to be consistent with a tightening in the labour market, and we expect this trend to persist over the next few quarters. The introduction of a National Living Wage at £7.20 in April 2016 – which will be almost 11 per cent above the National Minimum Wage that will still apply only six months prior to that in September 2015 – will support some workers' incomes (see Annex B). Nominal earnings are also expected to be underpinned by rising whole economy inflation. But continued growth in real earnings over the medium term is underpinned by our forecast that productivity growth returns to more normal levels.

3.77 Real household disposable income growth is expected to pick up sharply in calendar year 2015 to 3.9 per cent, although this year-on-year comparison is somewhat distorted by 'base effects' reflecting the uneven path of quarterly household income growth in 2014. The comparison between the fourth quarter of 2014 and fourth quarter of 2015 is not affected by this volatility, and we expect real household disposable income growth of 2.4 per cent over that period. We then expect real household disposable income growth to settle at just under 2 per cent a year over the medium term.

Chart 3.20: Real household disposable income per capita



Source: OBR

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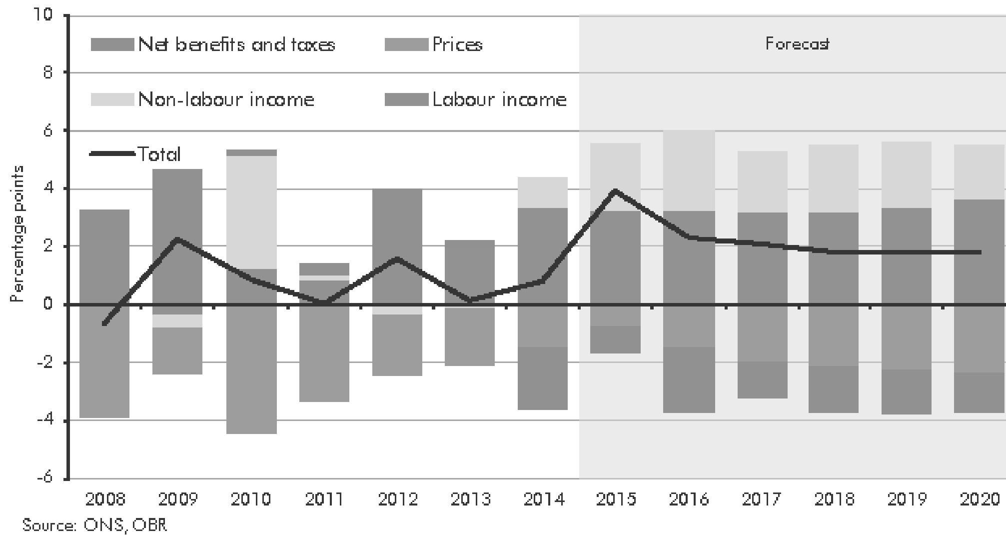
Chart 3.21: Contributions to real household income growth

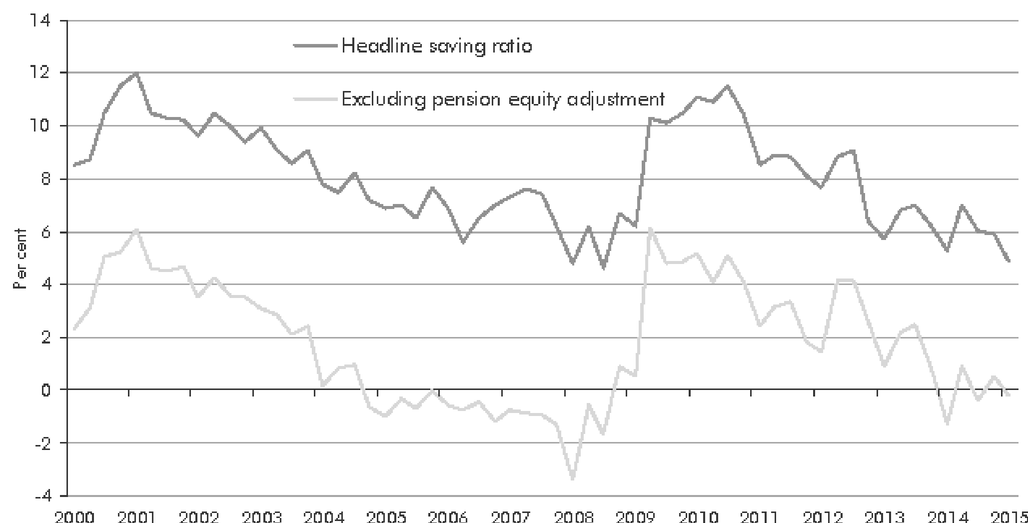


Source: ONS, OBR

The saving ratio

3.78 Having fallen back sharply in 2012 and 2013, the household saving ratio declined more slowly in 2014, averaging just over 6 per cent over the year as a whole – only slightly below the average of 6½ per cent in 2013. One reason for the relative slowing in the rate of decline is an increase in measured pension saving in 2014, which is included in the National Accounts measure of the saving ratio. If this adjustment for pension saving is excluded, then the saving ratio declined slightly more quickly in 2014 than suggested by the headline measure, and at a similar pace to the previous year (Chart 3.22).

Chart 3.22: The household saving ratio



Note: Estimate of the saving ratio excluding the pension equity adjustment calculated as household disposable income less consumption, as a proportion of houshold disposable income.
Source: ONS, OBR

3.79 Household consumption is expected slightly to outstrip the growth of household disposable income over the forecast period, placing downward pressure on the household saving ratio.[8] This is more than offset by an increase in pension saving, which steadily increases over the forecast period and implies a gradual increase in the saving ratio between 2015 and 2020. The expected rise in pension saving reflects a number of factors. The effect of auto-enrolment on employee and employer pension contributions is expected to increase as coverage continues to expand and minimum contribution rates increase. Gilt yields – which are used by the ONS in the calculation of imputed pension saving – are also expected to rise over the forecast period, increasing total pension contributions.

The housing market and dwellings investment

3.80 House price inflation has eased in line with our March forecast, with year-on-year growth of 8.5 per cent in the first quarter of 2015 (Chart 3.23). Housing market indicators suggest price growth will continue to slow in coming quarters, but at a slightly faster rate than we previously expected.

3.81 Beyond the near term, we use a house price model to inform our forecast.[9] Currently, the model suggests that there is a significant amount of credit rationing occurring in the mortgage market. Financial institutions are extending less secured debt than the model

[8] While household consumption growth is expected to be slightly stronger than household disposable income over the forecast period, it is expected to be weaker than total labour income growth, as shown in Chart 3.19. This is because labour income includes employer pension contributions, which are expected to grow relatively strongly over the forecast period but which have a neutral effect on household disposable income.
[9] For more information on our house price model see Auterson (2014): *Working paper No. 6: Forecasting house prices.*

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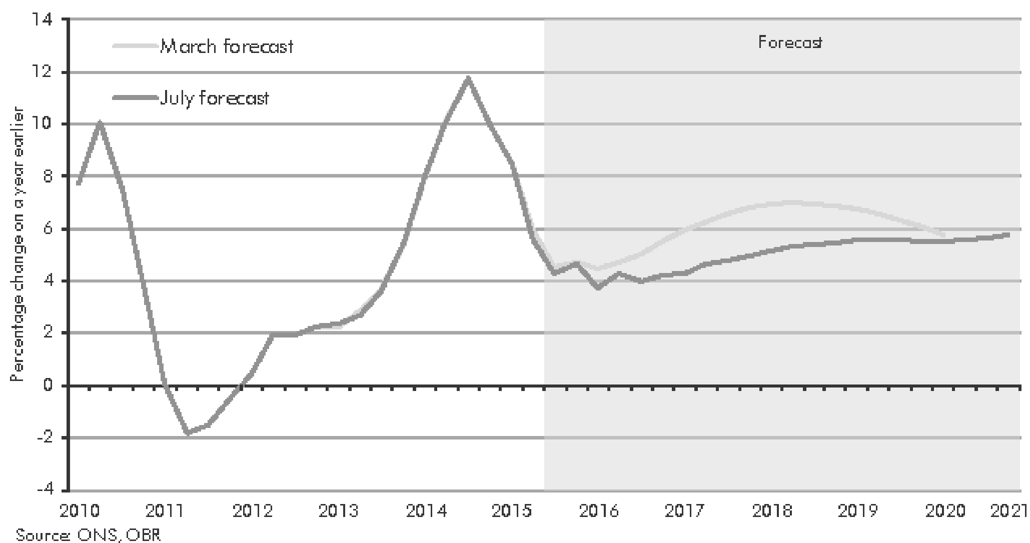
suggests households would like, based on the fundamental drivers of mortgage demand. Previously we assumed that this implied mortgage rationing would dissipate relatively quickly as implementation of the Mortgage Market Review (MMR) bedded down. We have now decided to assume that implied rationing eases more slowly, which means that there is still rationing at the end of the forecast period. This seems more consistent with changes to the regulatory environment, ongoing repair to bank balance sheets and changes to lenders' behaviour brought about by the MMR. As a result, despite the boost to housing demand from the upward revision to our forecast for household income since March, mortgage lending and house price inflation are lower on average over the medium term than in March (Chart 3.23). The level of house prices in the first quarter of 2020 is 5.0 per cent lower than in our March forecast. Overall, house prices are expected to rise by 34.1 per cent by the first quarter of 2021.

Chart 3.23: House price inflation forecast



Source: ONS, OBR

3.82 We have revised up our near-term residential property transactions forecast as the latest data have been above our March forecast and mortgage approvals have rebounded. We continue to assume that the volume of transactions returns towards its historical average as a percentage of the housing stock over the forecast period, which means that our medium-term forecast is similar to March.

3.83 In line with our forecasts for house prices and property transactions, we expect relatively strong growth in residential investment over the forecast period. Near-term growth in housebuilding is encouraged by recent strong growth in house prices, while medium-term strength is motivated by housing market turnover returning towards its historical average. Historically-low interest rates over the forecast period also encourage housebuilding. However, despite strong growth, the relatively low starting point means that total private residential investment is expected to remain below its pre-crisis peak as a share of GDP

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throughout the forecast period (Chart 3.24). It also means that housing supply growth is not sufficient to alleviate pressure on house prices brought about by strong growth in housing demand over the forecast period, so prices are expected to rise relative to both consumer prices and household incomes. Relative to their pre-crisis peaks in 2007, real house prices at the end of the forecast are expected to be 13.3 per cent higher and the ratio of house prices to average earnings 7.2 per cent higher.

3.84 A number of recent policy measures could affect the housing market:

- there is a risk that the greater flexibility over people's access to their pension assets that came into effect in April 2015 could affect the housing market via buy-to-let purchases. As we explained in Box 3.1 of the December 2014 *EFO*, we have not adjusted our forecast for this as we assume that there will be broadly offsetting effects from the flows associated with this policy change. A similar view was expressed in the Bank of England's July *Financial Stability Report*, drawing on evidence that only a small number of pensioners would have a sufficient income in retirement to qualify for a buy-to-let mortgage, have a pension pot large enough for a deposit and would not previously have been eligible to access their pension;

- the changes to the inheritance tax regime announced in this Budget are likely to increase the incentives for the elderly to purchase housing and discourage them from selling their homes as the tax disincentives to hold a property to death have fallen, potentially putting upward pressure on house prices. This may also have an effect on the allocation of housing, as set out in Box 3.3;

- the restriction in mortgage interest rate relief to the basic rate and the removal of the 'wear and tear allowance' announced in this Budget is likely to reduce returns to buy-to-let property, putting downward pressure on house prices. Overall, we estimate that this effect will be small and be offset by the change in inheritance tax, so we have not adjusted our forecast for house prices; and

- the 1 per cent a year reductions in social sector rents for four years from April 2016 announced in this Budget will directly reduce social landlords' rental income. We expect that this will reduce their ability and willingness to invest in housing, so we have lowered our forecast for residential investment, proportionate to the expected reduction in rental income. The effect is to reduce the level of private residential investment by around 0.7 per cent by the end of the forecast period, which is broadly consistent with a reduction in housebuilding of 4,000 in 2020-21. Over the forecast period, our assumptions suggest around 14,000 fewer affordable homes will be built. We do not expect private sector house-builders to offset this effect to any material degree.

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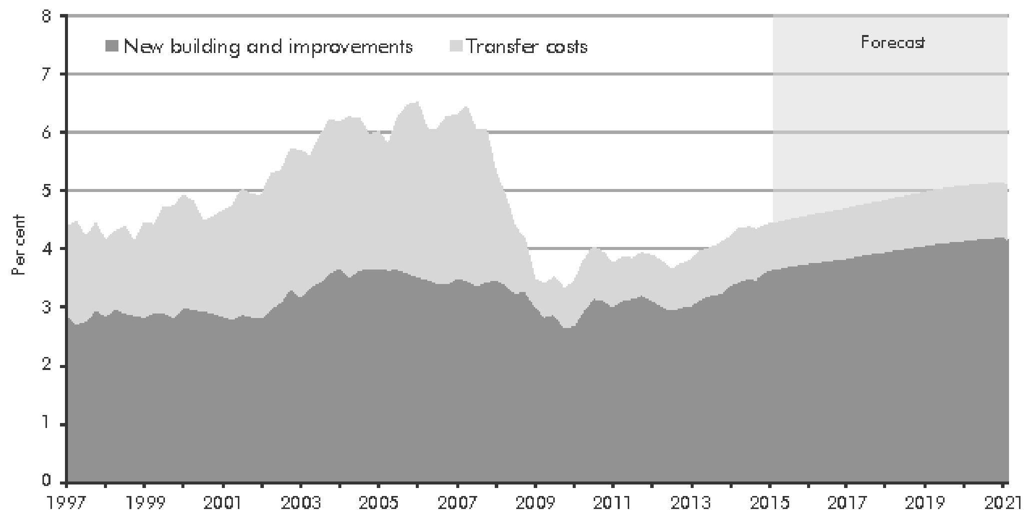
Chart 3.24: Residential investment as a share of nominal GDP



Source: ONS, OBR

Net lending and the balance sheet

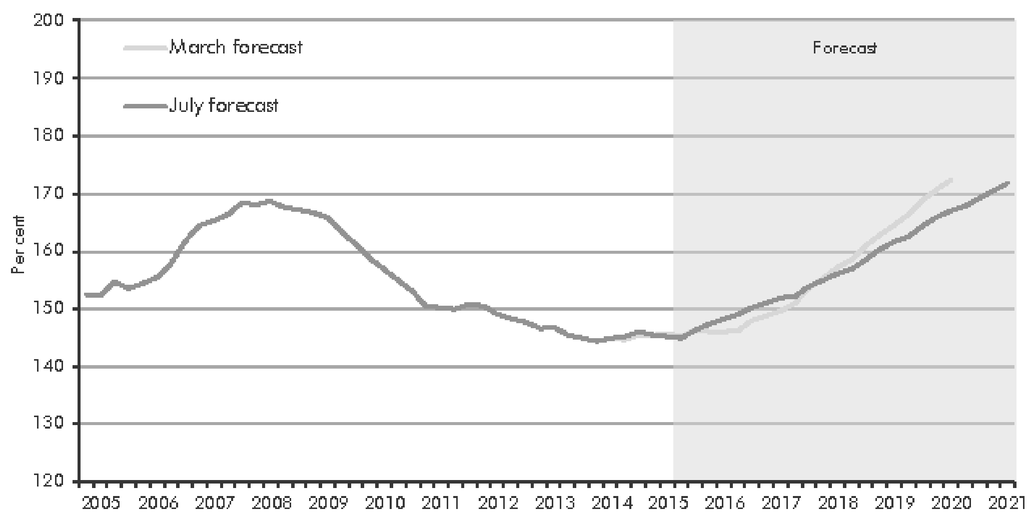
3.85 We expect the ratio of total debt to income to rise by around 26 percentage points between the start of 2015 and the start of 2021, although this is a slower rate than we expected in March. Of this just under 12 percentage points is accounted for by an increase in secured debt, due to strong growth in house prices and transactions. The remaining increase reflects unsecured debt, consistent with our forecast of household net lending remaining negative throughout most of the forecast period.

3.86 The downward revision to our forecast for the increase in the gross household debt to income ratio reflects a number of factors:

- in cash terms, gross debt is expected to be £111 billion lower by the start of 2020 than we expected in March. Of this, around £14 billion reflects lower than expected household debt at the start of 2015;
- around £145 billion is accounted for by less accumulation of secured debt. This reflects an assumption that mortgage lending conditions will remain tighter than historic norms for a longer period which bears down on house price growth (as described in paragraph 3.81);
- this is slightly offset by more accumulation of unsecured debt, which we expect to be £48 billion higher than in our March forecast. This largely reflects a weaker starting point for households' net position, which has been revised down in 2014; and
- household disposable income is expected to be around 1½ per cent lower by the start of 2020 than we forecast in March.

3.87 This is the second successive material downward revision to our household debt forecast. Household debt is now expected to reach 167 per cent of household income by the start of 2020, compared to just under 184 per cent in our December 2014 forecast. Around two-thirds of the downward revision to the level of total debt is attributable to a weaker path for secured debt – in turn reflecting our assumption that tighter mortgage lending conditions will prevail for a longer period. We have also revised down the path of unsecured lending, partly reflecting downward revisions to our forecasts for household investment and consumption, as well as an allowance for an ongoing reduction in households' outstanding unsecured debt through write-offs.

Chart 3.25: Household gross debt to income



Source: ONS, OBR

The corporate sector

Business investment and stockbuilding

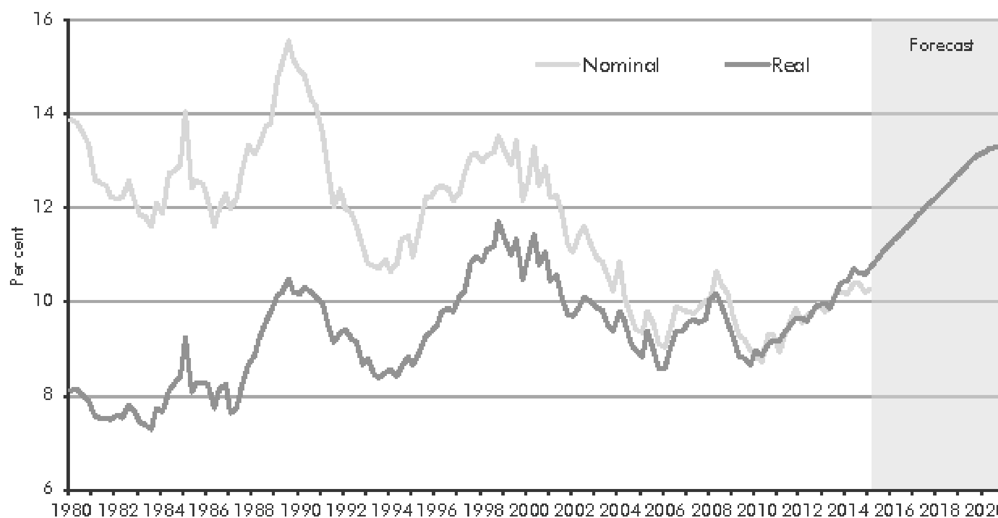
3.88 The latest data show that business investment growth slowed in the second half of 2014, but that in 2014 as a whole it grew by 8.0 per cent, higher than we estimated in March. Business investment grew by 2.0 per cent in the first quarter of 2015, higher than the average quarterly growth rate in 2014.

3.89 The Bank of England's *Agents' Summary* reports investment intentions consistent with moderate growth over the coming year. We expect business investment to continue to grow relatively strongly in 2015 and 2016 and have revised up our forecast in subsequent years. As usual, the latest ONS data are subject to potentially large revisions, so our forecast is subject to considerable uncertainty.

3.90 As Chart 3.26 shows, our forecast implies that real business investment will rise as a share of GDP, as typically occurs during the later stages of a recovery. It also shows how the

nominal share has tended to fall relative to the real share because investment goods price inflation has tended to be lower than whole economy inflation.

Chart 3.26: Business investment as a share of GDP



Source: ONS, OBR

3.91 The latest ONS data indicate that stocks acted as a small drag on GDP growth in the first quarter of 2015. We expect inventories to make a small negative contribution to GDP growth in 2015 as a whole and assume they will be neutral from 2016 onwards.

Corporate profits

3.92 We expect non-oil profits to grow slightly faster than nominal GDP in the near term, as the output gap closes. They picked up strongly in the first quarter of this year, increasing at a quarterly rate of just under 4 per cent. We expect non-oil profits to grow by just under 5 per cent in 2015 as a whole, slightly below our March forecast. Thereafter, we assume that profits will grow broadly in line with nominal GDP.

The government sector

3.93 Total public spending amounted to 40.7 per cent of GDP in 2014-15.[10] But not all government spending contributes directly to GDP. Spending on welfare payments and debt interest, for example, merely transfers income from some individuals to others. The government sector contributes directly to GDP via consumption of goods and services, and investment. These together accounted for 21.9 per cent of GDP in 2014-15.

[10] Total managed expenditure (TME).

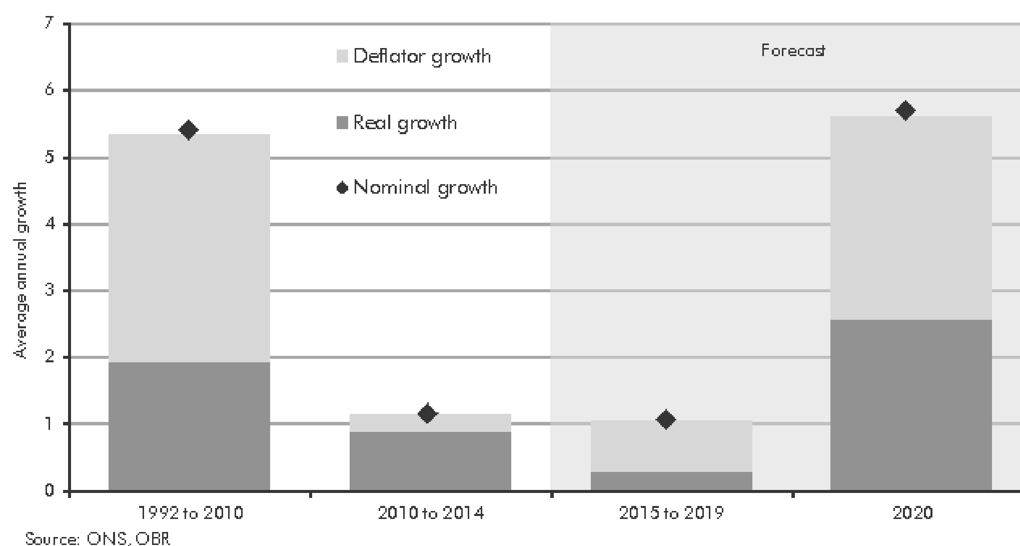
Real government consumption

3.94 Real government consumption is expected to grow faster in 2015 than we forecast in March. In that forecast, government consumption was expected to fall between 2016 and 2018, before picking up sharply in 2019. We now forecast rising government consumption between 2016 and 2018, due to the Government's decisions on the pace and composition of fiscal consolidation. Government consumption is also forecast to increase in 2019, but at a lower rate than in our March forecast, and grows strongly in 2020.

Nominal government consumption

3.95 Growth in the implied price of government consumption – the ratio of nominal spending to real government consumption – has been subdued as cash spending growth has slowed (Chart 3.27). This largely reflects the way real government consumption is measured, as described in Box 3.2. In the first quarter of 2015, the government consumption deflator was lower than we forecast in March. As a result, the government consumption deflator is expected to fall by 1.0 per cent in 2015 as a whole, despite stronger growth in real government consumption. Revisions to the path of cash spending on government consumption mean that compared with March the government consumption deflator is expected to grow more quickly between 2016 and 2018 and then less quickly in 2019. Strong growth in nominal government consumption in 2020 means strong deflator growth in that year, although we have slightly offset the mechanical effect in order to limit its impact on nominal GDP growth and the distortion this would imply to our fiscal forecasts.

Chart 3.27: Government consumption

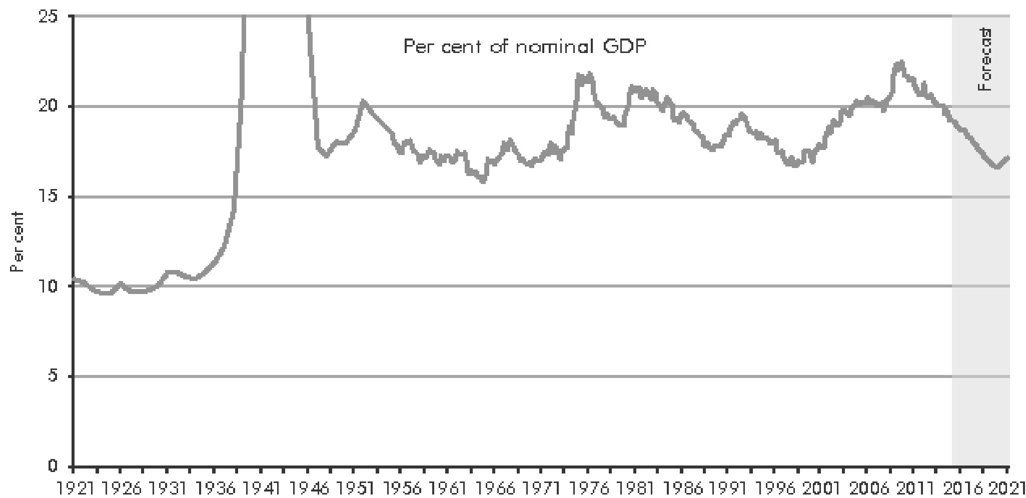


Source: ONS, OBR

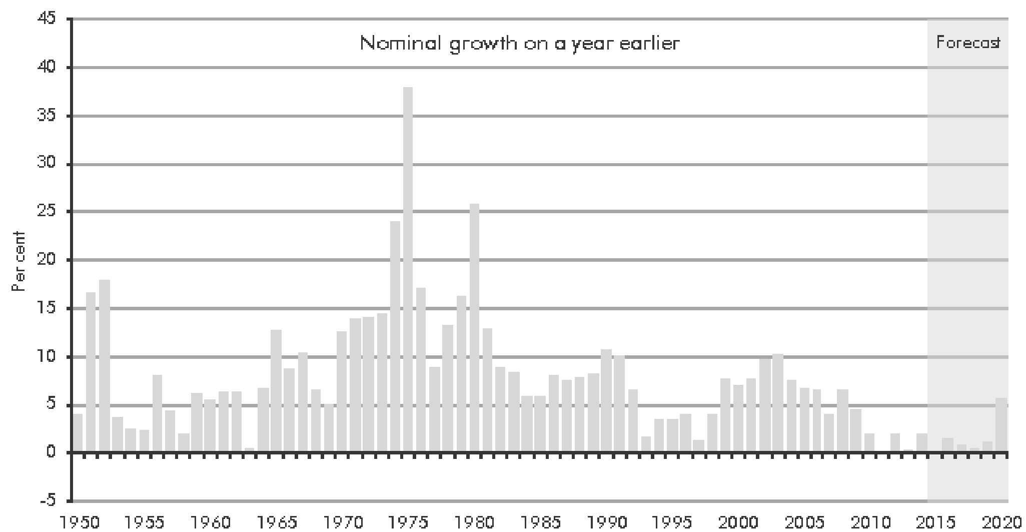
3.96 The Government's updated fiscal plans imply higher cash spending on government consumption over the forecast period. Nominal government consumption is forecast to grow by 1.7 per cent a year on average over the forecast period, having been forecast to remain

flat in March. This implies that nominal government consumption will fall from 19.0 per cent of GDP in 2015 to 16.8 per cent of GDP in 2019, compared with 16.1 per cent in March. While cash spending is higher than we forecast in March, Chart 3.28 shows that in 2019 nominal government consumption is forecast to fall to its lowest share of GDP on a quarterly basis since 1965. That would complete a fall of 5.8 per cent of GDP over a ten-year period – unprecedented in UK peacetime history.

Chart 3.28: Government consumption of goods and services



Note: Government consumption as a share of GDP is estimated to have peaked at 52.2 per cent of GDP in 1944.



Note: Government consumption on a National Accounts basis, excluding Network Rail.
Source: ONS, OBR

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General government employment

3.97 In the absence of specific workforce plans, we project general government employment based on some simple and transparent assumptions. We begin by taking our forecasts of government spending on total pay – the paybill, which we proxy using a measure of current government expenditure. We then combine these top-down numbers with our forecasts of government wage growth to derive paybill per head. From this we derive a projection of general government employment – headcount. In reaching a judgement on general government wage growth, we take into account recent data, stated government policy (such as pay freezes), historic rates of pay drift, and whole economy earnings growth over the medium term. Reflecting the uncertain timing of implied employment cuts and wage changes, we simply assume that the profile of government employment will match the profile of government consumption, which largely comprises pay and procurement costs.

3.98 Applying the Government's latest medium-term spending figures to our fiscal forecast implies that general government employment will fall by 0.4 million by the first quarter of 2020, leading to a total fall from early 2011 of 0.7 million.[11] These figures are 0.2 million smaller than projected in March, reflecting the higher departmental spending pencilled in at this Budget. The year to year profile is now also more even, but this still represents an overall 13 per cent cut in headcount, consistent with departmental and local authorities' cash spending growing slowly, and modest annual wage growth. Again, we expect the fall to be more than offset by a 1.3 million rise in market sector employment, making a rise in total employment of 0.9 million by the start of 2020. Both general government and market sector employment are then projected to rise in the final year of the forecast period.

The external sector

Export and import volumes

3.99 The latest ONS data contained upward revisions to export growth in 2014 relative to its estimates at the time of our March forecast. Our forecast for exports has been revised down in 2015, reflecting a downward revision to UK export markets. This does not incorporate a specific downward adjustment for the potentially disruptive events unfolding in Greece, which could have a negative impact on the euro area and therefore UK exports. Lower expected growth in UK export markets is also expected to feed through to lower growth in exports from 2016 onwards, which means that the declining path for the UK export market share is similar to our March forecast. (This is the first forecast we have published that extends to 2020. It includes a forecast for the cash value of total exports of goods and services of around £630 billion in 2020, around a third lower than the Government's £1 trillion export aspiration.)

[11] This estimate excludes a classification change introduced in the second quarter of 2012, which moved around 196,000 employees from the public to the private sector. Further details about the assumptions for public sector wages and employment can be found in the supplementary economy tables available on our website.

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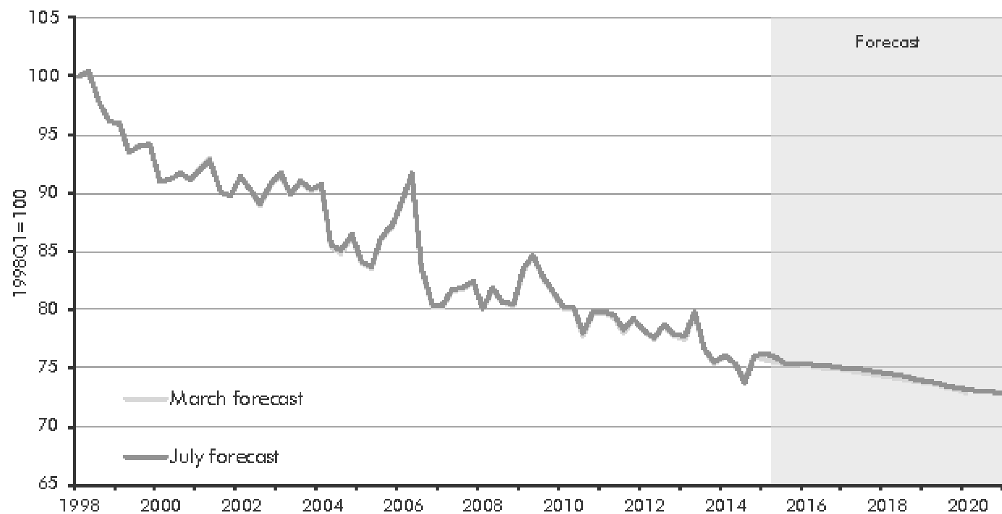
Chart 3.29: UK export market share

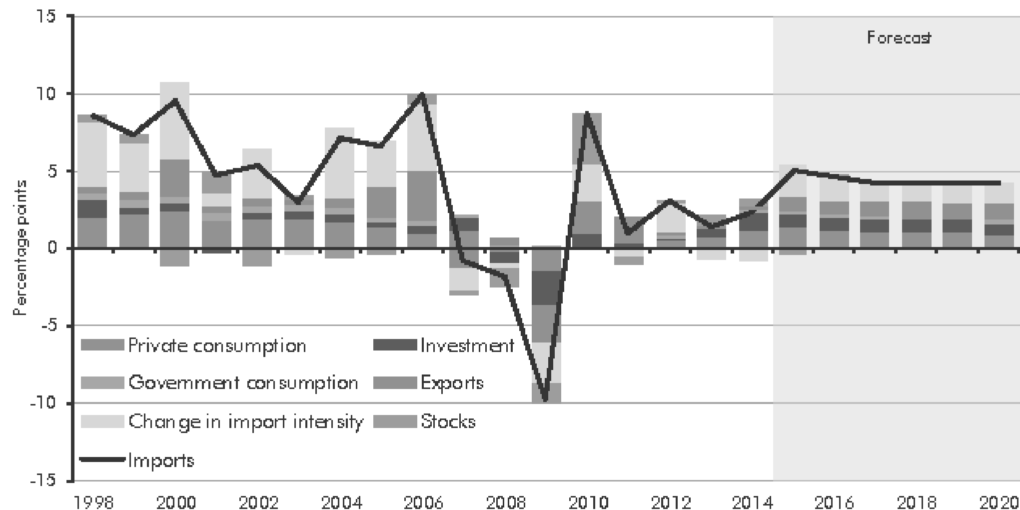


Note: UK export share defined as exports divided by UK export markets, where exports series have been adjusted to account for the effect of VAT Missing Trader Intra Community (MTIC) fraud.
Source: OECD, ONS, OBR

3.100 Revisions to outturn data suggest that imports growth was stronger in 2014 than was estimated at the time of our March forecast. Outturn data also show that imports grew strongly in the first quarter of 2015 and we have revised up our forecast for imports in 2015 as a result.

3.101 As described earlier in the chapter, the IMF has revised down its forecast for the trade intensity of world GDP growth. Our forecast for UK imports is determined by the outlook for import-weighted domestic demand and a trend rise in the import intensity of that demand. Following the IMF, we have revised down our assumption of the rate at which import intensity will rise and have therefore revised down UK imports growth from 2016 onwards.

Chart 3.30: Contributions to import-weighted domestic demand and imports growth

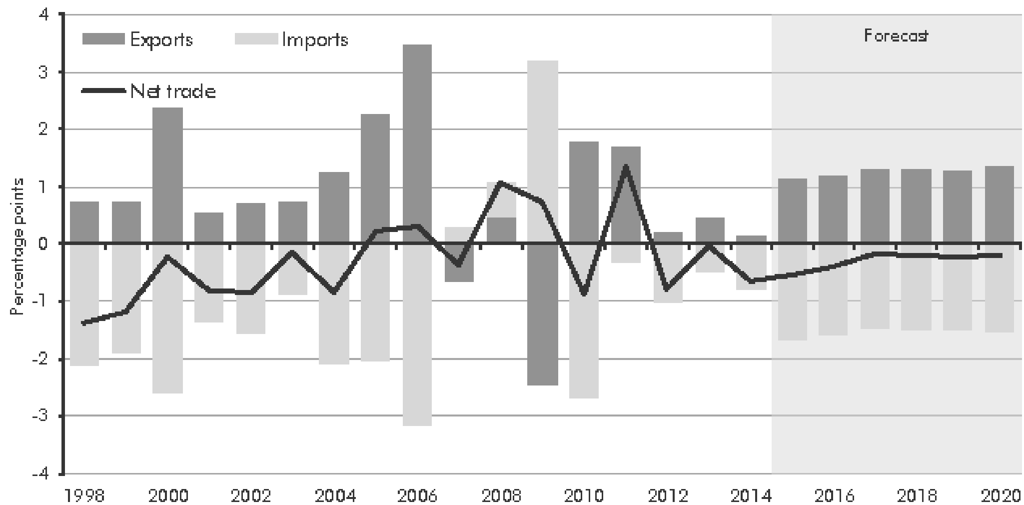


Source: ONS, OBR

3.102 Monthly trade data are volatile, making it difficult to infer underlying trends that might be relevant to our forecast. Goods exports increased by 4.8 per cent in April, whereas goods imports fell by 4.8 per cent. Quarterly trade data also suggest varying contributions to GDP growth. In the fourth quarter of 2014, net trade added 0.8 percentage points to GDP growth, but then subtracted 0.6 percentage points in the first quarter of 2015.

3.103 Net trade is expected to subtract more from GDP growth in 2015 than we expected at the time of our March forecast, reflecting a downward revision to exports growth and an upward revision to imports growth. Thereafter, our forecast for the contribution of net trade to GDP growth is unchanged from March. From 2017 onwards, net trade is expected to make a small negative contribution to annual GDP growth in each year, reflecting the weakness of export market growth, a gradual decline in export market share and a gradual increase in the ratio of imports to import-weighted domestic demand.

Chart 3.31: Net trade contribution to real GDP



Source: ONS, OBR

The current account balance

3.104 The current account deficit widened to 5.9 per cent of GDP in 2014 – the largest annual peacetime deficit since at least 1830, based on the Bank of England's historical dataset. Much of the recent weakness in the current account reflects a significant deterioration in the income balance: the income deficit widened to 2.4 per cent of GDP in 2014, compared to an average surplus of just over 1 per cent in the decade preceding the crisis. Much of this reflects a worsening of the UK's net rate of return – the return on its assets relative to the return on its liabilities. Box 3.4 of our March 2015 *EFO* discussed recent trends in the UK's income balance.

3.105 Our forecast for the income account is conditioned on an assumption that the rate of return has been temporarily depressed – reflecting, for example, relatively weak rates of growth in the euro area and the effect of large cross-border fines and compensation paid by UK firms abroad (although this is not verifiable from published data). As these factors recede we expect the income account to improve gradually over the forecast period, although we do not expect the income balance to return to pre-crisis surplus levels. Taken together with little overall change in the trade balance, this implies an improvement in the current account over the forecast period, with the deficit narrowing to 2.8 per cent of GDP by 2020. This judgement is subject to significant uncertainty – not least because early estimates of the income account can be subject to large revisions.

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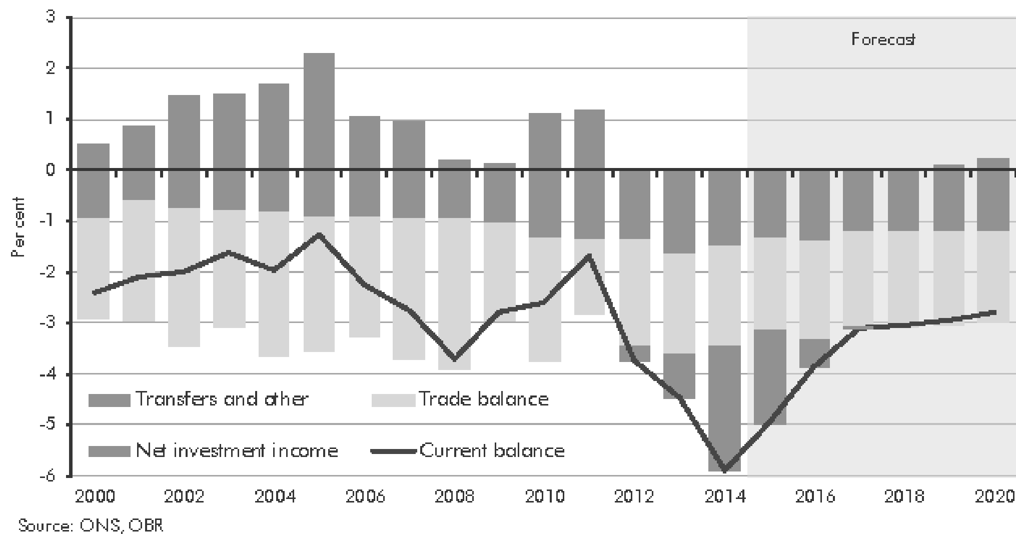
Chart 3.32: Current account balance as a share of GDP



Source: ONS, OBR

Sectoral net lending

3.106 In the National Accounts framework that we use for our economic forecast, the income and expenditure of the different sectors imply paths for each sector's net lending or borrowing from others. By identity, these must sum to zero – for each borrower, there must be a lender. In 2015 we estimate that the public and corporate sectors are in deficit, the household sector close to balance and the rest of the world is in surplus (Chart 3.33).

3.107 By the end of the forecast period, the Government's fiscal policy decisions mean we expect the public sector's balance to have moved into surplus. The corporate sector and rest of the world are expected to provide most of the offsetting change, with rest of the world net lending expected to narrow from 4.9 per cent of GDP in 2015 to 2.7 per cent of GDP by the end of the forecast period. We expect the household position to remain relatively stable over the forecast period.

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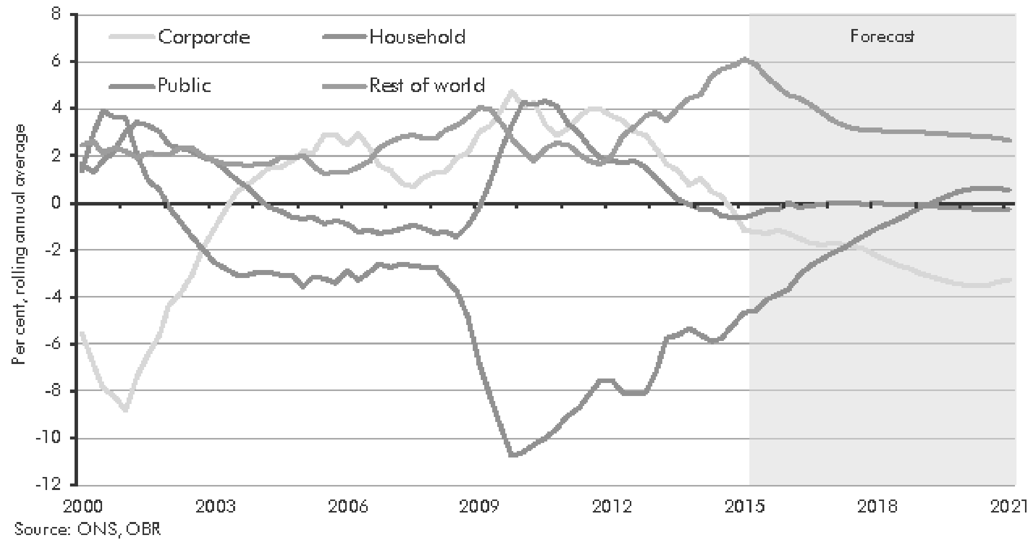
Chart 3.33: Sectoral net lending



Source: ONS, OBR

Risks and uncertainties

3.108 As always, we emphasise the uncertainties that lie around our central forecast for the economy, and the implications that these can have for the public finances (see Chapter 5). There are some risks and uncertainties common to all forecasts: conditioning assumptions may prove inaccurate; shocks may prove asymmetric; and previously stable relationships that have described the functioning of the economy may change.

3.109 In addition, prevailing economic circumstances suggest some specific risks to the forecast. In this *EFO*, we would highlight:

- potentially disruptive events in Greece that were still unfolding as our pre-measures forecast was closed. It is impossible to predict how the situation will evolve and what the implications will be for Greece's membership of the euro, but a period of heightened uncertainty could have a negative effect on confidence and investment across the euro area. This could have a negative impact on UK trade, to the extent that the euro area accounts for 40 per cent of UK exports. In its July *Financial Stability Report*, the Bank of England noted that neither UK banks nor their counterparties have a large direct exposure to Greece, although exposures to the wider group of peripheral euro-area economies are more significant. A deterioration in risk sentiment towards these countries more generally could therefore have a more material impact on the UK. To date, there has been less evidence of contagion to other peripheral countries than during the previous period of heightened uncertainty related to Greece in 2012, though that could change quickly;

- possible global financial market instability that could be associated with expected monetary policy tightening in the US has been cited by the IMF and OECD in their recent *WEO* and *Economic outlook* publications;
- domestically, productivity growth has fallen short of expectations once again and the pick-up we forecast from later this year remains a key judgement. If productivity fails to recover as predicted but wage growth continues to accelerate, the MPC could be forced to raise interest rates more quickly, which could in turn have a negative impact on consumer spending and housing investment. Alternatively, lower productivity growth could mean that wage growth falls short of our forecast;
- the Government has announced a number of significant policy changes in this Budget that could affect the economy in uncertain ways. The welfare spending cuts – which affect both in-work and out-of-work benefits – and the introduction of the National Living Wage could have different implications for employment and wage growth than those factored into our central forecast. Similarly, the effect of the fiscal consolidation – and changes in its pace and composition announced in the Budget – could be bigger or smaller than we expect; and
- the ratio of households' gross debt to income rises significantly over the forecast period (albeit less sharply than in previous forecasts). That seems consistent with supportive monetary policy and other interventions (such as the various elements of the Help to Buy scheme), but it could pose risks to the recovery over the longer term.

Comparison with external forecasters

3.110 In this section, we compare our latest projections with those of selected outside forecasters. The differences between our forecast and those of external forecasters are generally small compared with the uncertainty that surrounds any one of them.

3.111 In its May *Economic review*, the National Institute for Economic and Social Research (NIESR) forecast GDP growth of 2.5 per cent in 2015, slightly higher than our central forecast. NIESR forecast stronger consumption growth in 2015, offset by weaker investment growth. The OECD expects growth of 2.4 per cent in 2015, in line with our central forecast. The OECD forecasts weaker consumption and investment growth in 2015, but this is offset by a stronger forecast for net trade. All the external forecasts presented in Table 3.4 were published before the Government had announced its plan to cut public spending by a further £3 billion in 2015-16, though it is not clear how these forecasters might factor that into future forecasts. From 2016 onwards, our forecast averages 2.4 per cent a year, which is within the relatively narrow range (from 2¼ to 2¾ per cent a year) of these selected external forecasts.

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Table 3.4: Comparison with external forecasts

	Per cent					
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
OBR (July 2015)						
GDP growth	3.0	2.4	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.4
CPI inflation	1.5	0.1	1.1	1.6	1.8	1.9
Output gap	-1.0	-0.6	-0.4	-0.2	0.0	0.0
OECD (June 2015)						
GDP growth	2.8	2.4	2.3			
CPI inflation	1.5	0.0	1.7			
Output gap	-0.8	-0.5	-0.5			
Oxford Economics (May 2015)						
GDP growth	2.8	2.6	2.8	2.7	2.5	2.4
CPI inflation	1.5	0.4	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.8
Output gap	-4.0	-3.6	-3.2	-3.0	-2.9	-2.8
Bank of England (May 2015)[1,2]						
GDP growth (mode)		2.6	2.6	2.5		
CPI inflation (mode)[3]		0.7	1.7	2.1		
NIESR (May 2015)[1]						
GDP growth	2.8	2.5	2.4	2.5	2.6	2.6
CPI inflation	1.4	-0.1	1.0	1.9	2.1	2.0
European Commission (May 2015)						
GDP growth	2.8	2.6	2.4			
CPI inflation	1.5	0.4	1.6			
Output gap	-1.0	0.0	0.7			
IMF (April 2015)						
GDP growth	2.6	2.7	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.1
CPI inflation	1.5	0.1	1.7	2.0	2.0	2.0
Output gap	-1.8	-0.9	-0.5	-0.2	0.0	0.0

[1] Output gap not published.
[2] Forecast based on market interest rates and the Bank of England's 'backcast' for GDP growth.
[3] Fourth quarter year-on-year growth rate.

Comparison with the Bank of England's *Inflation Report* forecast

3.112 Alongside its May 2015 *Inflation Report*, the Bank of England published additional information about its forecast against which we can compare our own (see Table 3.5). This included information on the Bank staff's forecast for the expenditure composition of GDP, consistent with the MPC's central forecasts of GDP, CPI inflation and the unemployment rate.

3.113 The MPC's modal forecast for GDP growth is 2.6 per cent in 2015, higher than our forecast. The Bank's forecast anticipates upward revisions to outturn GDP data – some of which were delivered in the ONS Quarterly National Accounts data released at the end of June. Anticipating revisions implied stronger GDP growth in 2015 as a whole relative to the data that were available at the time of the Bank's forecast. The Bank's modal forecast for GDP growth is also higher than ours in 2016 and 2017. Table 3.5 shows that the Bank expects stronger consumption growth in both years as well as stronger business investment growth in 2017.

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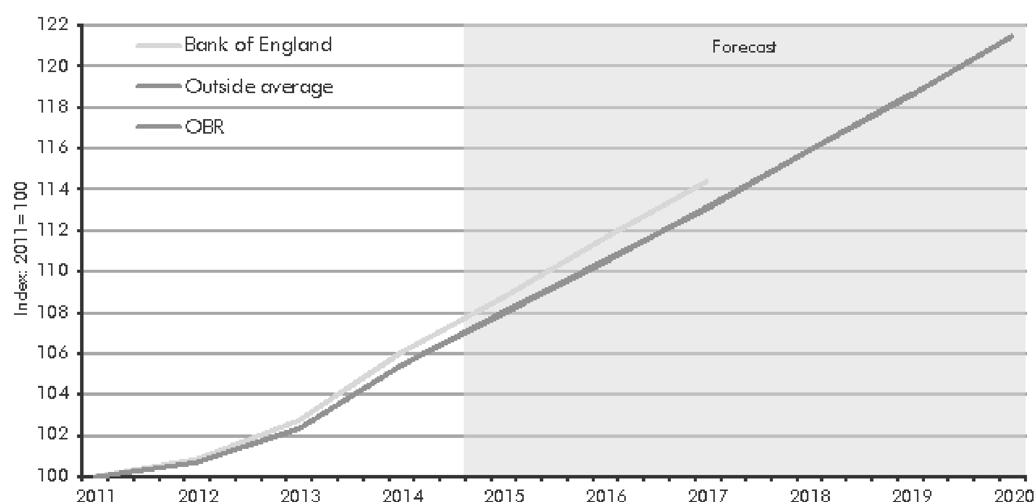
3.114 The Bank's employment growth forecast is also higher than ours, which is likely to in part reflect the Bank's decision to anticipate significantly stronger net inward migration over the next three years than is assumed in our forecast (which is based on the ONS principal population projections that will be updated later this year).

Chart 3.34: Comparison of forecasts for the level of GDP



Source: Bank of England, *Inflation Report*, May 2015, HM Treasury, *Forecasts for the UK economy: a comparison of independent forecasts* May/June, 2015, ONS, OBR

Table 3.5: Comparison with the Bank of England's illustrative projections

	Per cent		
	2015[1]	2016	2017
Bank of England May *Inflation Report* forecast			
Household consumption	2¾	3	2¾
Business investment	2½	6¾	8¼
Housing investment[2,3]	1	3¼	5
Exports	4	3½	3
Imports	4¼	3½	3½
Employment[4]	1¾	1	¾
Average weekly earnings[3,4]	2½	4	4
Difference from OBR forecast			
Household consumption	-0.3	0.5	0.4
Business investment	-3.5	-0.4	1.3
Exports	0.2	-0.3	-1.2
Imports	-0.8	-1.1	-0.8
Employment[4]	0.3	0.3	0.4

[1] 2015 estimates contain a combination of data and projections.
[2] Whole economy measure. Includes transfer costs of non-produced assets.
[3] We have not shown a comparison for housing investment and average weekly earnings as the definitions of these variables differ and are therefore not directly comparable.
[4] Four-quarter growth rate in Q4.

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Table 3.6: Detailed summary of forecast

	Percentage change on a year earlier, unless otherwise stated						
	Outturn	Forecast					
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
UK economy							
Gross domestic product (GDP)	3.0	2.4	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4
GDP level (2014=100)	100.0	102.4	104.8	107.4	109.9	112.5	115.2
Nominal GDP	4.6	3.5	4.0	4.3	4.3	4.4	4.8
Output gap (per cent of potential output)	-1.0	-0.6	-0.4	-0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Expenditure components of GDP							
Domestic demand	3.5	2.9	2.7	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
Household consumption[1]	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.3	2.0
General government consumption	1.6	1.2	0.5	0.3	0.1	0.3	2.6
Fixed investment	8.6	5.6	5.6	5.5	5.4	5.4	4.1
Business	8.0	6.0	7.2	6.9	6.6	6.5	4.7
General government[2]	3.4	2.4	-0.1	0.9	2.4	2.3	2.0
Private dwellings[2]	13.1	6.3	4.8	4.4	4.0	3.9	3.3
Change in inventories[3]	0.3	-0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Exports of goods and services	0.5	3.8	3.8	4.2	4.1	3.9	3.9
Imports of goods and services	2.4	5.1	4.6	4.3	4.3	4.2	4.2
Balance of payments current account							
Per cent of GDP	-5.9	-5.0	-3.9	-3.1	-3.0	-2.9	-2.8
Inflation							
CPI	1.5	0.1	1.1	1.6	1.8	1.9	2.0
RPI	2.4	0.9	2.1	2.8	3.1	3.1	3.2
GDP deflator at market prices	1.6	1.1	1.6	1.8	1.9	2.0	2.4
Labour market							
Employment (millions)	30.7	31.2	31.5	31.6	31.7	31.9	32.1
Productivity per hour	0.4	0.9	1.7	2.4	2.4	2.2	2.2
Wages and salaries	4.2	4.2	4.5	4.3	4.3	4.6	4.9
Average earnings[4]	2.6	2.2	3.6	3.9	3.9	4.1	4.4
LFS unemployment (% rate)	6.2	5.4	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.4
Claimant count (millions)	1.04	0.78	0.73	0.75	0.77	0.78	0.79
Household sector							
Real household disposable income	0.8	3.9	2.3	2.1	1.8	1.8	1.8
Saving ratio (level, per cent)	6.1	6.5	7.1	7.3	7.4	7.5	7.5
House prices	10.0	5.7	4.1	4.7	5.3	5.6	5.6
World economy							
World GDP at purchasing power parity	3.4	3.2	3.7	3.8	3.8	3.9	3.9
Euro area GDP	0.9	1.5	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6
World trade in goods and services	3.2	4.1	4.8	4.9	5.0	5.0	5.0
UK export markets[5]	3.5	3.2	4.5	4.7	4.9	4.9	4.9

[1] Includes households and non-profit institutions serving households.
[2] Includes transfer costs of non-produced assets.
[3] Contribution to GDP growth, percentage points.
[4] Wages and salaries divided by employees.
[5] Other countries' imports of goods and services weighted according to the importance of those countries in the UK's total exports

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Table 3.7: Detailed summary of changes to the forecast

	Percentage change on a year earlier, unless otherwise stated					
	Outturn	Forecast				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
UK economy						
Gross domestic product (GDP)	0.4	-0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0
GDP level (2014=100)[1]	0.0	-0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1
Nominal GDP	0.2	-0.6	0.4	0.4	0.0	-0.5
Output gap (per cent of potential output)	0.0	-0.2	-0.2	-0.1	0.0	0.0
Expenditure components of GDP						
Domestic demand	0.5	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0
Household consumption[2]	0.5	0.5	-0.2	-0.1	0.0	0.1
General government consumption	0.0	0.5	1.3	1.2	0.3	-1.2
Fixed investment	1.8	1.3	-0.6	-0.1	-0.3	1.0
Business	1.2	0.9	-0.3	0.4	0.1	2.1
General government[3]	-3.9	0.0	-2.1	-0.7	0.9	-0.5
Private dwellings[3]	6.5	2.7	-0.6	-1.1	-2.1	-1.3
Change in inventories[4]	0.0	-0.3	0.0	-0.1	0.0	0.0
Exports of goods and services	0.1	-0.2	-0.2	-0.3	-0.3	-0.3
Imports of goods and services	0.5	1.1	-0.1	-0.3	-0.3	-0.3
Balance of payments current account						
Per cent of GDP	-0.5	-0.7	-0.7	-0.5	-0.6	-0.7
Inflation						
CPI	0.0	-0.1	-0.1	0.0	-0.1	-0.1
RPI	0.0	-0.1	0.0	0.0	-0.1	-0.1
GDP deflator at market prices	-0.2	-0.5	0.4	0.4	0.0	-0.5
Labour market						
Employment (millions)	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0
Productivity per hour	0.3	0.0	-0.4	-0.2	-0.1	-0.2
Wages and salaries	0.4	0.2	0.6	0.2	-0.2	-0.3
Average earnings[5]	0.4	-0.1	0.5	0.2	0.0	-0.3
LFS unemployment (% rate)	0.0	0.1	-0.1	-0.1	0.0	0.0
Claimant count (millions)	0.00	0.01	-0.01	-0.01	0.00	0.01
Household sector						
Real household disposable income	-0.6	0.2	0.2	-0.1	-0.3	-0.1
Saving ratio (level, per cent)	-0.6	-0.9	-0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2
House prices	0.0	-0.2	-0.9	-1.7	-1.6	-0.9
World economy						
World GDP at purchasing power parity	0.0	-0.3	0.1	-0.1	-0.2	-0.1
Euro area GDP	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.1	-0.1	0.0
World trade in goods and services	0.1	0.1	-0.1	-0.4	-0.4	-0.4
UK export markets[6]	0.3	-0.5	-0.2	-0.4	-0.3	-0.3

[1] Per cent change since March

[2] Includes households and non-profit institutions serving households.

[3] Includes transfer costs of non-produced assets.

[4] Contribution to GDP growth, percentage points.

[5] Wages and salaries divided by employees.

[6] Other countries' imports of goods and services weighted according to the importance of those countries in the UK's total exports

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4 Fiscal outlook

Introduction

4.1 This chapter:

- sets out the key economic and market determinants that drive the fiscal forecast (from paragraph 4.3);
- explains the effects of new policies announced in this Budget – and since the March Budget – on the fiscal forecast (from paragraph 4.5);
- describes the outlook for public sector receipts, including a tax-by-tax analysis explaining how the forecasts have changed since March (from paragraph 4.14);
- describes the outlook for public sector expenditure, focusing on departmental expenditure limits and the components of annually managed expenditure, including those subject to the Government's welfare cap (from paragraph 4.73);
- describes the outlook for government lending to the private sector and other financial transactions, including asset sales (from paragraph 4.137);
- describes the outlook for the key fiscal aggregates: headline and structural measures of public sector net borrowing and the current budget, and public sector net debt (from paragraph 4.159);
- summarises risks and uncertainties (paragraph 4.174); and
- provides a comparison with forecasts from international organisations (from paragraph 4.175).

4.2 Further breakdowns of receipts and expenditure and other details of our fiscal forecast are provided in the supplementary tables on our website. The medium-term forecasts for the public finances in this chapter consist of outturn 2014-15 data (or an estimate where this is not available), an in-year estimate for 2015-16, which makes use of published ONS outturn data for April to May, and then forecasts to 2020-21.[1] As in previous *Economic and fiscal outlooks (EFOs)*, this fiscal forecast:

[1] Outturn data are consistent with the *Public Sector Finances May 2015 Statistical Bulletin* (released in June) published by the Office for National Statistics and HM Treasury.

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- represents our central view of the path of the public finances, conditioned on the current policies and policy assumptions of the Government. On that basis, we believe that the outturns would be as likely to be above the forecast as below it;
- is based on announced Government policy on the indexation of rates, thresholds and allowances for taxes and benefits, and incorporates the impact of certified costings for all new policy measures announced by the Chancellor in the Budget. It also includes the effect of one costing that we were not able to certify as reasonable and central in the time available, but have included and will return to in our next forecast; and
- focuses on official 'headline' fiscal aggregates that exclude public sector banks.

Economic determinants of the fiscal forecast

4.3 Our fiscal forecasts are based on the economic forecasts presented in Chapter 3. Most economic forecasts focus on the outlook for real GDP, but it is nominal GDP that matters most when forecasting the public finances. Forecasts of tax receipts are particularly dependent on the profile and composition of economic activity. On the income side, labour income is generally taxed more heavily than company profits. On the expenditure side, consumer spending is subject to VAT and other indirect taxes while business investment attracts capital allowances that reduce corporation tax receipts in the short term. And while around half of public sector expenditure is set out in multi-year plans, large elements (such as social security and debt interest payments) are linked to developments in the economy – notably inflation, market interest rates and the labour market.

4.4 Table 4.1 sets out some of the key economic determinants of the fiscal forecast and Table 4.2 shows how these have changed since our forecast in March. Detailed descriptions of these forecasts and changes are provided in Chapter 3. In summary:

- **nominal GDP** is forecast to grow by 4.1 per cent a year on average between 2015-16 and 2019-20. This is down from 4.2 per cent a year in March;
- on the expenditure side of GDP, **nominal consumer spending** is forecast to grow by 4.2 per cent a year on average between 2015 and 2019, down from 4.3 per cent in March;
- on the income side of GDP, **wages and salaries** are forecast to grow by 4.3 per cent a year on average between 2015-16 and 2019-20, with cumulative growth over the forecast period slightly higher than March. Within that, employment is marginally higher, while average earnings growth is slightly stronger in the near-term and then weaker at the end of the forecast period. Non-oil, non-financial **profits** are forecast to grow by 4.2 per cent a year on average, down from 4.5 per cent in March;
- the CPI and RPI measures of **inflation** are little changed since March. We continue to assume that CPI inflation will return slowly to the Bank of England's 2 per cent target

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and that RPI inflation will rise relative to CPI inflation due to the effect of mortgage interest payments on the RPI;

- **house price inflation** has been revised down over the forecast period. **Residential property transactions** have been revised up in the near term, but are unchanged in the medium term (see paragraphs 3.80 to 3.84 for an explanation of these changes);

- **commercial property prices** have been rising strongly. We have changed our approach to assume that prices will grow in line with the Investment Property Forum's consensus forecast of commercial property capital value growth over the next two years, and in line with the GDP deflator thereafter. We assume that **commercial property transactions** in 2015-16 will grow in line with the average growth rate over the last three years, and then in line with real GDP thereafter;

- market-derived assumptions for **equity prices**, **interest rates** and the **oil price** reflect average prices in the 10 days to 25 June. Movements since March have generally been relatively small, with equity prices down a little and market interest rates slightly higher. Given the period over which they were taken, these assumptions will not reflect the latest market impact of the Greek debt crisis having escalated;

- our **oil and gas production** forecasts are informed by the central projections published by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) and are unchanged since March; and

- the **output gap** – which we use to estimate the structural health of the public finances – has been revised little since March. It is expected to average -0.6 per cent in 2015-16 and to close in 2018-19. That compares with -0.4 per cent and 2017-18 in our March forecast.

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Table 4.1: Determinants of the fiscal forecast

	Percentage change on previous year unless otherwise specified						
	Outturn	Forecast					
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
GDP and its components							
Real GDP	3.0	2.2	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4
Nominal GDP[1]	4.4	3.6	4.1	4.3	4.4	4.5	5.0
Nominal GDP (£ billion)[1,2]	1809	1873	1949	2032	2122	2216	2326
Nominal GDP (centred end-March £bn)[1,3]	1839	1908	1991	2076	2167	2264	2376
Wages and salaries[4]	4.7	4.0	4.4	4.3	4.4	4.7	5.0
Non-oil PNFC profits[4,5]	9.0	4.7	3.9	4.1	3.9	4.2	4.8
Non-oil PNFC net taxable income[4,5]	7.9	2.1	1.3	1.0	1.2	1.7	4.3
Consumer spending[4,5]	4.0	3.8	4.0	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.4
Prices and earnings							
GDP deflator	1.4	1.0	1.7	1.8	1.9	2.1	2.5
RPI (September)[6]	2.4	0.7	2.2	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.2
CPI (September)[6]	1.2	0.0	1.2	1.7	1.8	1.9	2.0
Average earnings[7]	2.8	2.3	3.6	3.9	4.0	4.2	4.4
'Triple-lock' guarantee (September)	2.5	2.8	3.3	3.9	3.9	4.1	4.3
Key fiscal determinants							
Claimant count (millions)	0.95	0.76	0.73	0.75	0.78	0.79	0.79
Employment (millions)	30.9	31.3	31.5	31.6	31.8	31.9	32.1
VAT gap (per cent)	9.4	9.3	9.3	9.3	9.3	9.3	9.3
Output gap (per cent of potential output)	-0.8	-0.6	-0.3	-0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Financial and property sectors							
Equity prices (FTSE All-Share index)	3580	3740	3898	4063	4241	4431	4650
HMRC financial sector profits[1,5,8]	4.4	3.6	4.1	4.3	4.4	4.5	5.0
Financial sector net taxable income[1,5]	-1.5	-3.4	1.6	2.9	5.2	7.1	11.4
Residential property prices[9]	10.1	4.6	4.2	4.9	5.4	5.6	5.7
Residential property transactions (000s)[10]	1204	1209	1254	1320	1387	1424	1436
Commercial property prices[10]	21.4	6.6	2.9	1.7	1.9	2.1	2.5
Commercial property transactions[10]	8.6	6.2	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4
Volume of stampable share transactions	4.4	-0.8	-0.8	-0.8	-0.8	-0.8	-0.8
Oil and gas							
Oil prices ($ per barrel)[5]	98.9	62.0	68.7	70.7	70.8	70.8	70.8
Oil prices (£ per barrel)[5]	60.0	40.1	43.7	44.8	44.6	44.3	44.0
Gas prices (p/therm)[5]	50.2	45.5	46.3	47.7	47.7	47.7	47.7
Oil production (million tonnes)[5]	39.7	38.3	36.7	34.9	33.4	30.9	29.4
Gas production (billion therms)[5]	13.1	12.6	11.9	11.4	10.9	10.3	9.8
Interest rates and exchange rates							
Market short-term interest rates (%)[11]	0.6	0.6	1.2	1.7	2.0	2.2	2.4
Market gilt rates (%)[12]	2.3	2.2	2.5	2.7	2.9	3.0	3.1
Euro/Sterling exchange rate (€/£)	1.28	1.39	1.39	1.37	1.36	1.34	1.33

[1] Not seasonally adjusted.
[2] Denominator for receipts, spending and deficit forecasts as a per cent of GDP.
[3] Denominator for net debt as a per cent of GDP.
[4] Nominal. [5] Calendar year.
[6] Q3 forecast used as a proxy for September.
[7] Wages and salaries divided by employees.
[8] HMRC Gross Case 1 trading profits.
[9] Outturn data from ONS House Price Index.
[10] Outturn data from HMRC information on stamp duty land tax.
[11] 3-month sterling interbank rate (LIBOR).
[12] Weighted average interest rate on conventional gilts.

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Table 4.2: Changes in the determinants of the fiscal forecast

	Percentage change on previous year unless otherwise specified					
	Outturn	Forecast				
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
GDP and its components						
Real GDP	0.4	-0.2	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0
Nominal GDP[1]	-0.1	-0.2	0.6	0.2	0.0	-0.6
Nominal GDP (£ billion)[1,2]	0	-5	6	10	11	-1
Nominal GDP (centred end-March £bn)[1,3]	-1	-2	10	12	4	-8
Wages and salaries[4]	0.6	0.2	0.6	0.0	-0.2	-0.3
Non-oil PNFC profits[4,5]	2.2	-1.2	0.4	0.2	-0.4	-0.8
Non-oil PNFC net taxable income[4,5]	2.3	-2.5	0.3	0.1	-0.7	-1.3
Consumer spending[4,5]	0.4	0.1	-0.3	-0.2	0.0	0.0
Prices and earnings						
GDP deflator	-0.3	-0.4	0.6	0.2	-0.1	-0.5
RPI (September)[6]	0.1	-0.2	0.0	0.0	-0.1	-0.1
CPI (September)[6]	0.0	-0.2	0.0	0.0	-0.1	-0.1
Average earnings[7]	0.5	0.0	0.5	0.1	-0.1	-0.3
'Triple-lock' guarantee (September)	0.0	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.0	-0.3
Key fiscal determinants						
Claimant count (millions)	0.00	0.01	-0.01	-0.01	0.00	0.01
Employment (millions)	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0
VAT gap (per cent)	-0.6	-0.6	-0.6	-0.6	-0.6	-0.6
Output gap (per cent of potential output)	0.0	-0.2	-0.1	-0.1	0.0	0.0
Financial and property sectors						
Equity prices (FTSE All-Share index)	-14	-62	-39	-31	-35	-60
HMRC financial sector profits[1,5,8]	-0.1	-0.2	0.6	0.2	0.0	-0.6
Financial sector net taxable income[1,5]	0.6	5.4	-1.9	-1.3	1.4	3.2
Residential property prices[9]	0.0	-0.4	-1.1	-1.8	-1.5	-0.6
Residential property transactions (000s)[10]	9	80	43	12	2	-1
Commercial property prices[10]	3.5	5.6	1.9	-0.1	-1.1	-2.3
Commercial property transactions[10]	-0.4	-0.5	-0.2	-0.3	-0.2	-0.4
Volume of stampable share transactions	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Oil and gas						
Oil prices ($ per barrel)[5]	0.0	-0.1	-0.5	-0.7	-0.6	-0.6
Oil prices (£ per barrel)[5]	0.0	-0.3	-1.2	-1.4	-1.3	-1.4
Gas prices (p/therm)[5]	0.0	-2.3	-4.0	-2.6	-2.6	-2.6
Oil production (million tonnes)[5]	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Gas production (billion therms)[5]	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Interest rates and exchange rates						
Market short-term interest rates[11]	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.3
Market gilt rates[12]	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.4
Euro/Sterling exchange rate (€/£)	0.00	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.04

[1] Not seasonally adjusted.
[2] Denominator for receipts, spending and deficit forecasts as a per cent of GDP.
[3] Denominator for net debt as a per cent of GDP.
[4] Nominal. [5] Calendar year.
[6] Q3 forecast used as a proxy for September.
[7] Wages and salaries divided by employees.
[8] HMRC Gross Case 1 trading profits.
[9] Outturn data from ONS House Price Index.
[10] Outturn data from HMRC information on stamp duty land tax.
[11] 3-month sterling interbank rate (LIBOR).
[12] Weighted average interest rate on conventional gilts.

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Policy announcements, risks and classification changes

4.5 The Government publishes estimates of the direct impact of tax and spending policy decisions on the public finances in its 'scorecard', after detailed discussions with the OBR. If we were to disagree with any of the final numbers they chose, we would use our own estimates in our forecast. We are also responsible for assessing any indirect effects of policy measures on the economic forecast.[2] These are discussed in Box 3.3 in Chapter 3. We note as risks to the fiscal forecast any significant policy commitments that are not quantifiable, as well as any potential statistical classification changes.

Direct effect of new policy announcements on the public finances

4.6 In Annex A, we reproduce the Treasury's scorecard of the direct effect on PSNB of policy decisions in this Budget or announced since the March Budget. We have endorsed all but one of the tax and annually managed expenditure costings in the table as reasonable and central estimates of the measures themselves. We were unable to certify one element of the welfare savings package as reasonable and central in the time available, but we have included the Treasury's estimate of its impact in our forecast and will return to the costing at our next forecast. Annex A also includes a formal assessment of the degree of uncertainty associated with each costing that we have certified.

4.7 Table 4.3 summarises the Treasury's policy scorecard and the changes since our last forecast to the Government's plans and assumptions for spending under Departmental expenditure limits (DELs). These encompass spending on public services, grants, administration and capital investment. The table excludes the effects of reclassifications, to show changes on a like-for-like basis. A positive figure means an improvement in PSNB, i.e. higher receipts or lower expenditure. (We produce a detailed breakdown in a supplementary fiscal table on our website, showing how each policy measure is allocated to different categories of tax and spending.) We also show how the indirect economic effects of these policy changes feed through into other tax and spending streams.

[2] In March 2014, we published a briefing paper on our approach to scrutinising and certifying policy costings, and how they are fed into our forecasts, which is available on our website: *Briefing paper No 6: Policy costings and our forecast*.

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Table 4.3: Summary of the effect of Government decisions on the budget balance

	£ billion					
	Forecast					
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Effects of receipts measures	1.0	4.0	5.1	6.8	5.8	6.5
of which:						
Onshore corporation tax	0.1	0.1	3.5	1.0	-1.8	-2.4
Bank surcharge	0.0	0.9	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.3
Income tax and NICs	-0.1	1.0	-2.3	1.3	3.1	3.6
Inheritance tax	0.0	0.0	-0.2	-0.5	-0.7	-0.8
Capital gains tax	0.0	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5
VAT	0.0	0.3	0.2	0.7	1.0	1.3
Insurance premium tax	0.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.6
Bank levy	0.0	-0.5	-0.7	-0.8	-1.0	-1.2
Climate change levy	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.9
Vehicle excise duties	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.7	1.0	1.4
Other	0.0	-0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2
Effects of AME measures	0.2	5.6	7.1	9.8	12.9	14.0
of which:						
Current AME	0.2	5.6	6.9	9.8	12.8	13.9
of which:						
Welfare	0.3	5.6	6.9	9.7	12.5	13.3
Other	-0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.6
Capital AME	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.1
	Summary of changes					
Total effect of Government decisions	2.8	-2.4	-8.0	-6.3	10.4	4.3
of which:						
Scorecard receipts and AME measures	1.2	9.6	12.2	16.7	18.7	20.5
RDEL changes[1]	1.3	-17.2	-27.0	-28.3	-12.1	-21.6
CDEL changes[1]	1.0	1.8	2.1	0.8	1.6	1.9
Indirect effect of Government decisions	-0.6	3.4	4.6	4.6	2.2	3.5
Financial transactions[2]	3.7	5.1	4.2	3.1	2.7	-3.3

[1] The change in 2020-21 is relative to a baseline that assumes spending by departments would otherwise have remained constant as a share of potential GDP.
[2] Affects PSNCR, not PSNB.
Note: The full Treasury scorecard can be found in Annex A.
Note: This table uses the Treasury scorecard convention that a positive figure means an improvement in the PSNB, PSNCR and PSND

4.8 Chart 4.1 summarises the impact of Government decisions on PSNB across the forecast. In total, Government decisions in this Budget increase borrowing by an average of £5.6 billion between 2016-17 and 2018-19. The effect of the tax and welfare measures reduce borrowing by gradually increasing amounts over the forecast period. In the first three years, this is more than offset by higher DEL spending. Thereafter, the larger effects of the tax and welfare measures more than offset the higher profile of DELs, by sufficient amounts to achieve a surplus in 2019-20 and increase the expected surplus in 2020-21.

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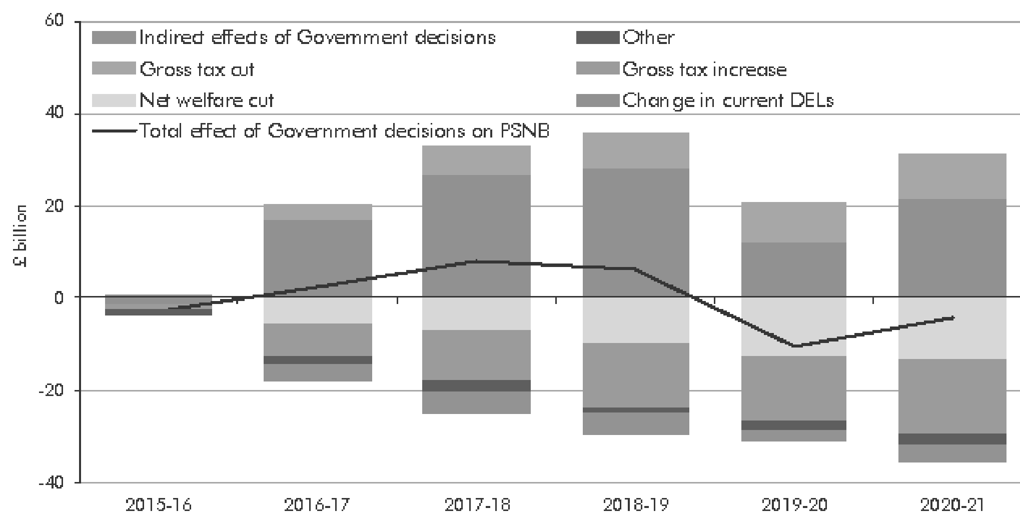
Chart 4.1: Impact of policy measures on public sector net borrowing



Source: OBR

Contingent liabilities and provisions

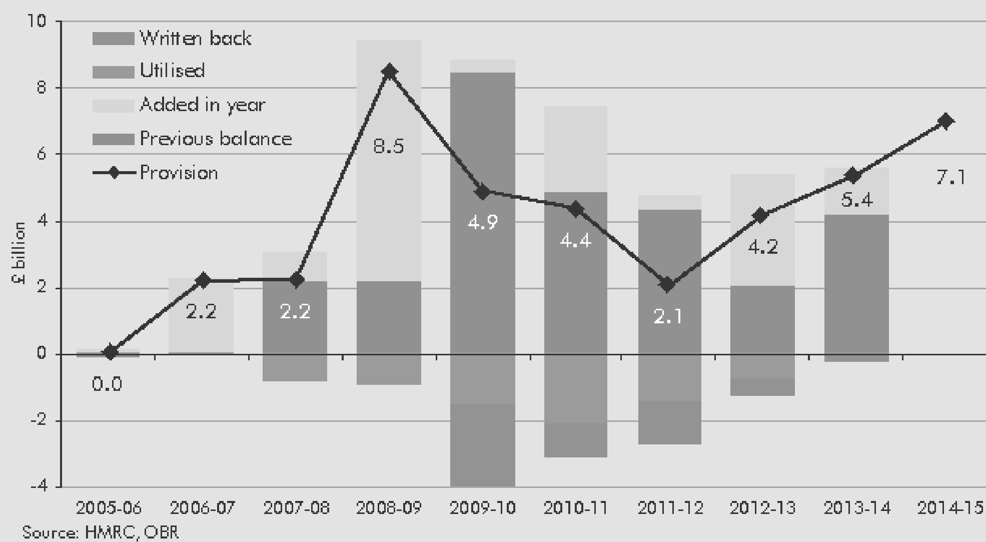
4.9 We have asked the Treasury to identify any changes to future contingent liabilities as a result of policy announcements since March. The Government has signed an agreement to join the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) with a total capital contribution of £2 billion, 80 per cent of which is callable capital and therefore represents a contingent liability.

4.10 Our forecasts include a provision for the losses associated with tax litigation payments. Box 4.1 outlines the provisions included within our current forecast, as well as the evolution of these provisions over previous years.

Box 4.1: Tax litigation provisions

HMRC includes provisions in its accounts to cover risks from litigation cases where the tax at risk is greater than £100 million. The provisions cover cases where HMRC believes it is probable a settlement payment will be required and when the amount can be reliably estimated. It is expected these provisions will typically be paid out over a five-year period although, given the drawn out nature of this type of litigation, there remains a significant degree of uncertainty over when the final settlement will be made. Provisions increased from £2.1 billion in 2011-12 to £4.2 billion in 2012-13 and £5.4 billion in 2013-14.

Chart A: HMRC tax litigation provision



Source: HMRC, OBR

Chart A shows the relationship between HMRC provisions and the amounts actually utilised. We forecast a profile of payments against tax litigation cases, which is equivalent to HMRC's amounts utilised. This has previously been included as negative tax, but we have now switched our forecast to capital grants in AME, consistent with ESA10 National Accounts guidelines. When provisions increased between 2005-06 and 2008-09, that was followed by an increase in the amounts utilised. Provisions fell between 2008-09 and 2011-12 and the amounts utilised fell back to a very low level. However, provisions started rising again in 2012-13 and we expect the upward trend to continue. Our forecast for 2014-15 provisions is £7.1 billion. So we also expect the amounts utilised to increase in the coming years from the very low level in 2013-14. Table A presents our forecast for this *EFO*. Given the uncertainty over the precise timing of settlement payments we have spread the amount across the forecast period on a gradually rising trend.

Table A: HMRC tax litigation costs forecast

	£ billion					
	Forecast					
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
HMRC tax litigation costs	0.5	0.8	1.0	1.3	1.6	2.0

Classification changes

4.11 Our forecasts include various items where we are anticipating future revisions or classification changes that the ONS has previously announced that it will include in the public finance statistics, but has not done so yet. In particular, these include various environmental levies that boost both receipts and spending. Details of the items that are not yet in the outturn statistics are shown in a supplementary fiscal table on our website.

4.12 One classification uncertainty that may be relevant to future forecasts relates to housing associations. At present, these are classified in the private sector, so their income, spending, borrowing and debt do not feature in our forecast. But Government policies – including the social sector rent measure in this Budget and the Right-to-Buy proposals that are not yet firm enough to be included in this forecast – could prompt the ONS to reconsider this classification. If housing associations were to be classified as part of the public sector, their approximately £60 billion[3] of debt would be added to public sector net debt while the social sector rent reduction policy announced in this Budget would increase rather than reduce public sector net borrowing because the full amount of the rent reduction would then reduce public sector income, and outweigh the housing benefit and other expenditure savings.

Financial sector interventions

4.13 The Government undertook a number of interventions in the financial sector as a result of the crisis and recession of the late 2000s. Box 4.2 provides an update on the fiscal impact of these past interventions.

Box 4.2: Fiscal impact of the financial interventions

This box provides an update on crisis-related interventions in the financial system, in particular:

- equity injections into Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS), Lloyds and the nationalisation of Northern Rock plc;
- holdings in Bradford & Bingley (B&B) and NRAM plc, now managed by UK Asset Resolution (UKAR);
- loans through the financial services compensation scheme (FSCS) and various wholesale and depositor guarantees; and
- other support, through the asset protection scheme, special liquidity scheme, credit guarantee scheme and a contingent capital facility – all now closed.

Table B summarises the position as at the end of March 2015. Since then, the Government has sold further shares in Lloyds and has extended the Lloyds trading plan until end of December 2015. It has also announced plans to begin the process of selling RBS shares.

In total, £134 billion has been disbursed by the Treasury to date since the crisis. By the end of

[3] Homes & Communities Agency, 2014 *Global Accounts of Housing Providers*, page 23.

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March, principal repayments on loans, proceeds from share sales and redemptions of preference shares amounted to £41 billion, up from the £39 billion reported in our last *EFO*. The additional repayments mainly relate to the sale of Lloyds shares through the trading plan and the UKAR loan (Northern Rock and NRAM plc). In total, the Treasury also received a further £20 billion, mainly from fees, but also from interest that is now included for all institutions as 'other fees received'. So the net cash position stood at around a £73 billion shortfall.

By the end of March, the Treasury was owed £37 billion (largely the value of loans outstanding); it held shares in Lloyds and RBS valued at £44 billion; and its holdings in B&B and NRAM plc had an equity book value of £7 billion according to their latest Annual Report and Accounts.

If the Treasury was to receive all loan payments in full, and sold the shares at their end of March 2015 values, it would realise an overall cash surplus of £15 billion, but these figures exclude the costs to the Treasury of financing these interventions. If all interventions were financed through debt, the Treasury estimate that additional debt interest costs would have amounted to £22 billion by end of March 2015, implying an overall cost of £7 billion to the Government.

Table B: Cost of financial interventions

	£ billion					
	Cash disbursed	Principal repayments	Other fees received[1]	Outstanding payments	Market value[2]	Implied balance
Lloyds	20.5	9.5	2.8	0.1	12.5	4.4
RBS	45.8	0.5	4.1	1.2	31.7	-8.3
UK Asset Resolution	41.3	21.4	3.7	18.9	7.1	9.8
FSCS	20.9	5.1	2.3	15.8	-	2.3
Other institutions	5.3	4.3	0.1	1.0	-	0.1
Credit Guarantee Scheme	-	-	4.3	-	-	4.3
Special Liquidity Scheme	-	-	2.3	-	-	2.3
Pre-financing total	133.8	40.8	19.6	37.0	51.3	14.9
Exchequer financing						-22.0
Total						-7.1

[1] Fees relating to the asset protection scheme and contingent capital facility are included within the Lloyds and RBS figures

[2] Lloyds and RBS figures are based on average share prices in the 10 working days to 31 March 2015. UKAR is book value of equity derived from its Annual Report and Accounts of 31 March 2015.

Public sector receipts

4.14 Table 4.4 summarises our receipts forecast. The tax-to-GDP ratio is expected to rise slightly in 2015-16 and then more significantly in 2016-17 (due in part to the abolition of the NICs contracting out rebate). The ratio is then forecast to remain at around 34.2 per cent of GDP in the remaining years of the forecast. Non-tax receipts – in particular interest and dividend receipts – are also expected to rise over the forecast period, so that total receipts rise by 1.1 per cent of GDP between 2014-15 and 2020-21.

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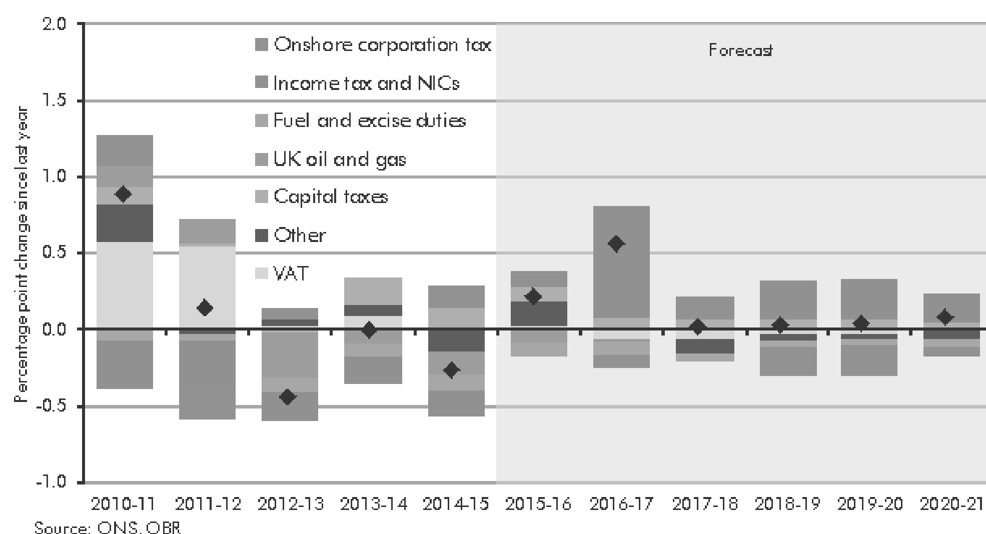
Table 4.4: Major receipts as a per cent of GDP

	Per cent of GDP						
	Estimate	Forecast					
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Income tax and NICs	15.1	15.2	15.9	15.9	16.2	16.4	16.6
Value added tax	6.2	6.2	6.1	6.1	6.0	6.0	6.0
Onshore corporation tax	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.3	2.1	2.0	1.9
UK oil and gas receipts	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Fuel duties	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.3
Business rates	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4
Council tax	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.4
Excise duties	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Capital taxes	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.7
Other taxes	2.8	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
National Accounts taxes	33.4	33.6	34.1	34.1	34.1	34.2	34.2
Interest and dividend receipts	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5
Other receipts	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Current receipts	35.7	35.9	36.5	36.6	36.7	36.7	36.8

4.15 Chart 4.2 shows how the tax-to-GDP ratio has changed in recent years, broken down by tax stream. As a result of weak real earnings growth and the effect of policy measures, income tax and NICs receipts have fallen as a share of GDP in every year since 2010-11, having the largest negative effect on the total tax-to-GDP ratio over this period. Oil and gas receipts, fuel and excise duties have also fallen as a share of GDP over this period. Partly offsetting those falls are VAT receipts, which have risen by 0.7 per cent of GDP, driven mainly by the VAT rate rises in January 2010 and January 2011.

Chart 4.2: Changes in the tax-to-GDP ratio



Source: ONS, OBR

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Sources of changes in the tax-to-GDP ratio

4.16 Movements in the tax-to-GDP ratio arise from two sources:

- changes in the composition of GDP can lead to specific tax bases growing more or less quickly than the economy as a whole; and
- the effective tax rate paid on each tax base can change due to policy or other factors.

4.17 We have used this approach to identify the main drivers of the rise in the tax-to-GDP ratio over the forecast period.

Change in the tax-to-GDP ratio over the forecast period

4.18 Chart 4.3 shows that the main sources of the 0.9 percentage point rise in the tax-to-GDP ratio between 2014-15 and 2020-21 are:

- a 1.4 per cent of GDP rise in PAYE income tax and NICs receipts. This is driven almost entirely by a rise in the effective tax rate. Most of this is explained by the return of fiscal drag, as productivity and real earnings growth are assumed to pick up, dragging more income into higher tax brackets. Around 0.3 per cent of GDP is accounted for by the Budget 2013 policy decision to abolish the NICs contracting out rebate from April 2016. This is expected to raise NICs receipts by around £5 billion in 2016-17;
- a 0.3 per cent of GDP rise in self-assessment (SA) receipts. This largely reflects the measures announced in this Budget and previously; and
- a 0.3 per cent of GDP rise in stamp duty land tax (SDLT) receipts (including the Scottish LBTT). This reflects both the tax base and the effective tax rate. Growth in the tax base reflects rising prices and transactions over the forecast period. With SDLT thresholds in the new 'slice' system still fixed in cash terms over the forecast period, rising house prices drag a greater proportion of the value of residential transactions into higher tax brackets.

4.19 Partly offsetting these rises are:

- a 0.4 per cent of GDP fall in excise duties. This is explained by declining tax bases, due to falling alcohol and tobacco consumption and rising fuel efficiency. These falls are only partly offset by assumed rises in duty rates, raising the effective tax rate;
- a 0.3 per cent of GDP fall in onshore corporation tax receipts. This is driven by a falling effective tax rate as strong growth in investment increases the use of capital allowances and as the financial sector sets past losses against future liabilities. The main corporation tax rate has been reduced again in this Budget, falling to 18 per cent in 2020-21;

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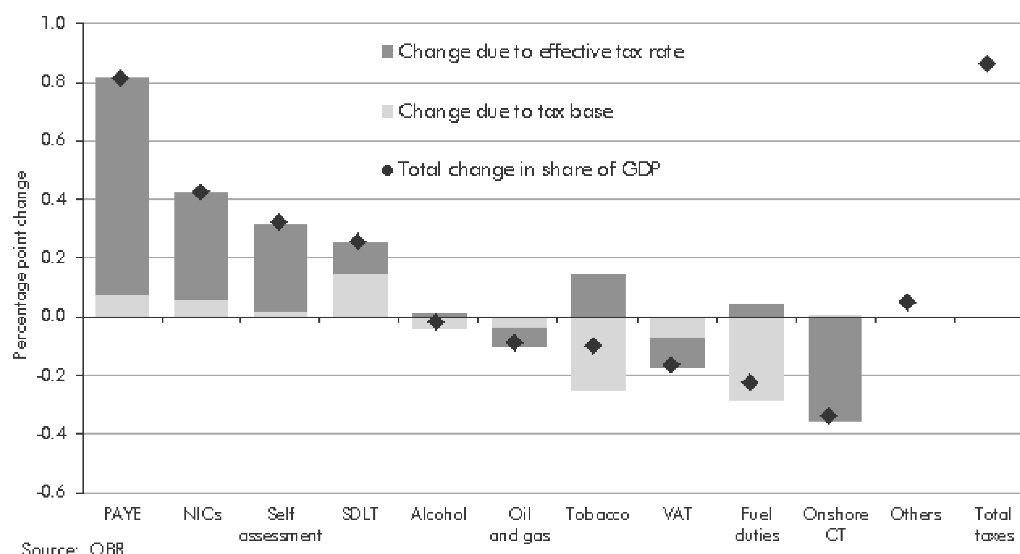
- a 0.2 per cent of GDP fall in VAT receipts. Assumed increases in the share of household spending devoted to mortgage interest payments – which are zero-rated – reduce the effective tax rate; and
- a 0.1 per cent of GDP fall in oil and gas receipts. This reflects the drop in receipts expected in 2015-16 following the sharp fall in oil and gas prices over the past year (reducing the tax base) and policy measures announced in the last Budget (reducing the effective tax rate).

4.20 Our forecast assumes that HMRC's compliance activities will be sufficient to reduce the implicit 'tax gap' between actual receipts and the theoretical amount that would be received if compliance with the tax system was 100 per cent. As explained in Annex A, we have sought assurance from the Treasury that both the baseline compliance activity implicit in our pre-measures forecast and the additional measures that appear on the scorecard will be adequately funded. We will keep this funding and the receipts effect of HMRC compliance activity under review in future forecasts.

Chart 4.3: Sources of changes in the tax-to-GDP ratio (2014-15 to 2020-21)



Source: OBR

Detailed current receipts forecast

4.21 Our detailed receipts forecasts and changes since March are presented in tables 4.5 and 4.6.

Table 4.5: Current receipts

	£ billion						
	Estimate	Forecast					
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Income tax (gross of tax credits)[1]	163.7	170.2	184.8	192.6	205.8	219.9	234.6
of which: Pay as you earn	*140.0*	*145.2*	*155.1*	*165.4*	*175.0*	*186.5*	*198.9*
Self assessment	*23.6*	*25.3*	*31.3*	*29.2*	*33.1*	*35.6*	*37.7*
National insurance contributions	110.3	114.8	125.8	131.2	137.4	144.2	151.6
Value added tax	111.3	115.9	119.2	123.1	127.9	132.9	139.2
Corporation tax[2]	42.9	43.1	43.4	47.7	45.9	43.7	44.8
of which: Onshore	*40.8*	*42.5*	*42.8*	*47.2*	*45.4*	*43.4*	*44.5*
Offshore	*2.1*	*0.6*	*0.6*	*0.5*	*0.5*	*0.4*	*0.4*
Petroleum revenue tax	0.1	0.0	-0.1	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.1
Fuel duties	27.2	27.1	27.3	27.8	28.3	28.8	29.4
Business rates	27.3	28.0	29.0	29.4	30.6	31.7	32.9
Council tax	27.9	28.4	29.0	29.7	30.4	31.2	32.1
VAT refunds	13.7	13.6	13.8	13.7	13.6	13.8	14.7
Capital gains tax	5.6	6.4	7.4	8.3	9.1	10.0	10.8
Inheritance tax	3.8	4.2	4.6	4.8	4.9	5.2	5.7
Stamp duty land tax[3]	10.9	11.5	12.6	13.9	15.7	17.3	18.9
Stamp taxes on shares	2.9	3.2	3.3	3.5	3.6	3.8	4.0
Tobacco duties	9.3	9.1	9.0	9.0	9.2	9.3	9.5
Spirits duties	3.0	3.2	3.2	3.4	3.6	3.7	3.9
Wine duties	3.8	4.0	4.1	4.4	4.7	5.0	5.3
Beer and cider duties	3.6	3.5	3.4	3.6	3.6	3.7	3.7
Air passenger duty	3.2	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.5	3.7	3.8
Insurance premium tax	3.0	3.5	4.5	4.7	4.7	4.8	4.9
Climate change levy	1.6	2.3	2.4	2.3	2.2	2.1	1.9
Other HMRC taxes[4]	6.6	6.9	6.9	7.0	7.2	7.5	7.8
Vehicle excise duties	5.9	5.6	5.5	5.7	5.8	6.0	6.3
Bank levy	2.8	3.7	3.1	2.8	2.6	2.4	2.2
Bank surcharge	0.0	0.0	0.9	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.3
Licence fee receipts	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.4
Environmental levies	3.6	6.0	7.3	8.3	10.2	12.3	13.6
EU ETS auction receipts	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.6
Scottish taxes[5]	0.0	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.9	1.0	1.1
Diverted profits tax	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4
Other taxes	6.2	7.1	7.1	7.2	7.4	7.6	7.8
National Accounts taxes	603.6	628.9	665.2	693.5	724.4	757.3	796.3
Less own resources contribution to EU	-3.0	-3.1	-3.2	-3.1	-3.1	-3.2	-3.5
Interest and dividends	5.8	5.8	6.6	8.6	10.2	11.8	12.6
Gross operating surplus	36.9	39.2	41.1	43.1	44.8	46.9	49.0
Other receipts	3.0	2.0	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.7
Current receipts	646.4	672.8	711.2	743.7	777.9	814.4	856.1
Memo: UK oil and gas revenues[6]	*2.2*	*0.7*	*0.5*	*0.6*	*0.5*	*0.5*	*0.5*

[1] Includes PAYE, self assessment, tax on savings income and other minor components.
[2] National Accounts measure, gross of reduced liability tax credits.
[3] Forecast for SDLT is for England, Wales and Northern Ireland from 2015-16.
[4] Consists of landfill tax (ex Scotland from 2015-16), aggregates levy, betting and gaming duties and customs duties.
[5] Consists of Scottish LBTT and landfill tax but not the Scottish rate of income tax or aggregates levy.
[6] Consists of offshore corporation tax and petroleum revenue tax.

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Table 4.6: Change to current receipts since March

	£ billion					
	Estimate	Forecast				
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Income tax (gross of tax credits)[1]	1.1	-0.3	2.8	-0.1	3.0	3.4
of which: Pay as you earn	1.4	1.3	1.5	1.7	1.4	0.5
Self assessment	0.2	-0.9	2.0	-1.1	2.0	3.2
National insurance contributions	1.5	1.7	1.9	2.0	2.0	1.6
Value added tax	0.6	1.6	1.5	1.7	2.0	1.7
Corporation tax[2]	0.5	0.2	-0.3	3.1	0.3	-2.9
of which: Onshore	0.5	0.2	-0.2	3.2	0.6	-2.6
Offshore	0.0	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.3	-0.3
Petroleum revenue tax	-0.4	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1
Fuel duties	-0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Business rates	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.1	-0.1	-0.2
Council tax	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1
VAT refunds	-0.2	-0.4	0.6	1.0	0.9	0.3
Capital gains tax	-0.1	-0.1	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.2
Inheritance tax	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.3	-0.8	-1.2
Stamp duty land tax[3]	0.0	1.1	0.7	0.1	-0.4	-0.7
Stamp taxes on shares	-0.1	-0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Tobacco duties	-0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Spirits duties	-0.2	0.1	-0.1	-0.1	0.0	0.0
Wine duties	-0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Beer and cider duties	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1
Air passenger duty	0.0	-0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Insurance premium tax	0.0	0.5	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.6
Climate change levy	0.0	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5
Other HMRC taxes[4]	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
Vehicle excise duties	-0.2	-0.1	-0.1	0.2	0.5	0.9
Bank levy	0.0	0.1	-0.7	-1.0	-1.2	-1.3
Bank surcharge	0.0	0.0	0.9	1.5	1.5	1.3
Licence fee receipts	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Environmental levies	-1.2	0.1	0.6	0.9	1.4	2.9
EU ETS auction receipts	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.1
Scottish taxes[5]	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Diverted profits tax	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other taxes	0.0	1.5	2.0	2.1	2.4	2.6
National Accounts taxes	1.2	6.8	12.5	14.1	14.8	11.1
Less own resources contribution to EU	-0.1	-0.5	-1.0	-0.8	-0.7	-0.7
Interest and dividends	-0.5	-0.9	-0.9	-0.6	-0.4	-0.1
Gross operating surplus	-1.3	-0.4	-0.3	-0.2	-0.2	-0.3
Other receipts	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Current receipts	-0.6	5.5	10.3	12.6	13.5	10.0
Memo: UK oil and gas revenues[6]	-0.5	0.0	-0.1	-0.1	-0.2	-0.2

[1] Includes PAYE, self assessment, tax on savings income and other minor components.
[2] National Accounts measure, gross of reduced liability tax credits.
[3] Forecast for SDLT is for England, Wales and Northern Ireland from 2015-16.
[4] Consists of landfill tax (ex Scotland from 2015-16), aggregates levy, betting and gaming duties and customs duties.
[5] Consists of Scottish LBTT and landfill tax but not the Scottish rate of income tax or aggregates levy.
[6] Consists of offshore corporation tax and petroleum revenue tax.

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Changes in the receipts forecast since March

4.22 We have revised up our receipts forecast by a total of £51.8 billion between 2015-16 and 2019-20. As Table 4.7 shows, the main upward revisions are explained by:

- income tax and NICs, where strong outturn receipts at the end of 2014-15 and higher employment growth boost receipts;
- VAT, where strong receipts at the end of 2014-15 imply a smaller VAT gap, which is applied to the rest of the forecast period;
- environmental levies, where take-up of the feed-in tariff and renewables obligation schemes have been revised upwards. (These revisions affect spending by equal amounts);
- a classification change, with the expected costs of tax litigation cases switched from negative tax to capital grants, in line with National Accounts guidelines; and
- the effect of Government decisions at this Budget, where scorecard measures increase receipts by £4.9 billion a year on average and the indirect effects of Government decisions – notably via their effect in increasing nominal GDP growth – increase receipts by around £1.9 billion a year on average. Together these policy effects account for 63 per cent of the increase in expected revenue across the forecast.

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Table 4.7: Sources of change to the receipts forecast since March

	£ billion				
	Forecast				
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
March forecast	667.4	700.9	731.2	764.5	804.3
July forecast	672.8	711.2	743.7	777.9	814.4
Change	5.5	10.3	12.6	13.5	10.0
	Underlying OBR forecast changes				
Total	4.9	3.7	4.0	3.5	3.1
of which:					
Income and expenditure	1.2	0.7	0.7	0.0	-1.0
Average earnings	0.1	0.3	-0.4	-0.9	-1.3
Employee numbers	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.9
Non-financial company profits	0.2	-0.3	-0.3	-0.2	-0.1
Consumer expenditure	0.7	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.2
Investment	0.0	-0.3	-0.3	-0.4	-0.3
Other	-0.4	-0.1	0.4	0.1	-0.3
North Sea	0.0	-0.1	-0.1	-0.2	-0.2
Oil and gas prices	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.2	-0.1
Production and expenditure	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.1
Market assumptions	0.3	-0.1	-0.6	-1.2	-1.6
Residential property market	0.5	0.2	-0.6	-1.2	-1.7
Commercial property market	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0
Equity prices	-0.2	-0.4	-0.4	-0.4	-0.4
Interest rates	-0.1	0.0	0.2	0.4	0.5
Prices	-0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1
Other economic determinants	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.1	-0.3
Other assumptions	3.6	3.1	3.9	4.9	6.0
IT and NICs receipts and modelling	1.3	1.3	1.6	1.8	1.1
Corporation tax receipts and modelling	0.1	-0.1	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2
VAT receipts	1.2	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7
Environmental levies	0.1	0.6	0.9	1.4	2.9
Interest and dividend receipts and modelling	-0.9	-0.9	-0.7	-0.7	-0.5
Stamp duty land tax receipts and modelling	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.5
Provision for tax litigation losses switch	0.5	0.8	1.1	1.4	1.6
FCA fines	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
GAD Milne judgement	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other judgements and modelling	-0.2	0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.2
	Effect of Government decisions				
Total effect of Government decisions	0.6	6.5	8.5	9.9	6.9
Of which:					
Scorecard receipts measures	1.0	4.0	5.1	6.8	5.8
Indirect effects of Government decisions	-0.4	2.5	3.4	3.1	1.1

Tax-by-tax analysis of changes since March

Income tax and NICs

4.23 Higher- than-expected PAYE and NICs receipts on employment income explain the £2.6 billion upward revision to overall income tax and NICs receipts in 2014-15 since

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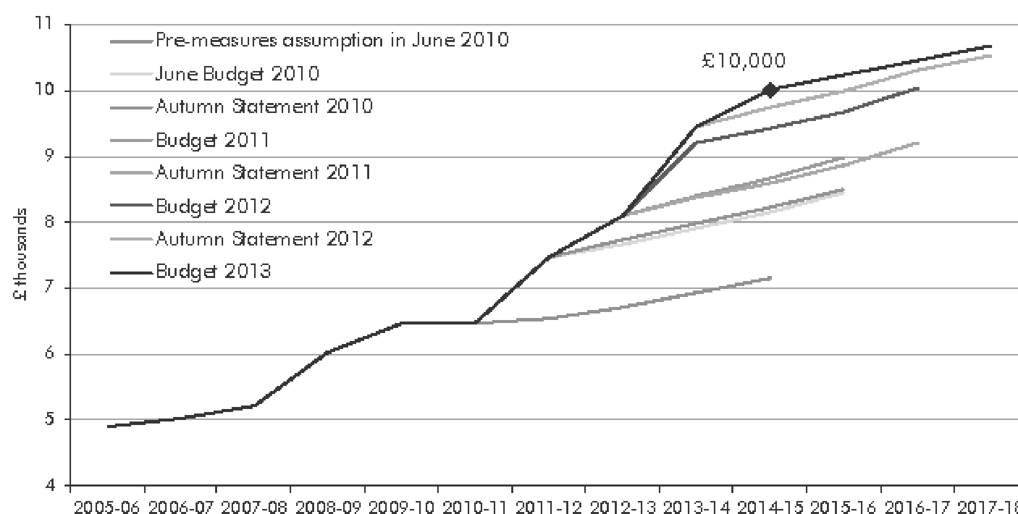
March. Bonuses in both the financial and business services sectors were stronger than expected in the final two months of 2014-15 and HMRC has revised up receipts for earlier months.

4.24 PAYE and NICs receipts are forecast to be higher in each year of the forecast period, with the stronger 2014-15 receipts pushed through to future years. Employment is expected to be modestly higher through the forecast, while the change in the profile for earnings growth boosts receipts in 2016-17 but lowers receipts in the final years of the forecast. The bringing forward to 2016-17 of the increase in the personal allowance to £11,000 and the rise in the higher rate threshold to £43,000 reduce receipts by around £1.5 billion, although there is some offset from the restriction in pension tax relief for those earning over £150,000.

4.25 The Government has announced a further increase in the personal allowance in this Budget, but not yet to its target level of £12,500 or the equivalent (on our forecast) of working 30 hours a week at the National Minimum Wage. The Government has told us that those are 'ambitions' rather than policies that should be reflected in our central forecast.

4.26 This has some parallels to the Coalition Government's commitment to raise the personal allowance to £10,000 in the last Parliament, where it announced in the June 2010 Budget that it would rise to £7,475 rather than scoring the full cost of reaching £10,000. The total scorecard cost of the successive rises in the personal allowance from the level inherited to £10,000 (reached in Budget 2013) was £10.8 billion in 2014-15, of which £3.9 billion appeared on the June 2010 scorecard. Chart 4.4 shows the successive rises in the personal allowance over that period, including the default inflation uprating assumption that applied for the remaining years in each forecast.

Chart 4.4: Income tax personal allowance levels in successive forecasts



Source: OBR

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4.27 We expect the National Living Wage to boost average earnings by around 0.4 per cent by 2020, with some offset from reduced employment. With many of those on the minimum wage close to or below the personal allowance or the lower earnings limit for NICs, the effective tax rate on the higher earnings will be very low. We have assumed that income tax and NICs will be boosted by £0.1 billion by 2020-21 (see Annex B).

4.28 PAYE receipts are expected to be boosted by the pension flexibility reforms announced in Budget 2014 and extended in the March Budget. We assume that these reforms will boost receipts by around £0.4 billion in 2015-16, rising to a peak of £1.4 billion in 2017-18. Pension withdrawals have been broadly as expected so far this year, but as receipts data are not yet available we have not updated the estimated effects of these measures. They remain subject to significant uncertainty.

4.29 Receipts for self-assessment income tax (SA) increased by 13.4 per cent in 2014-15, boosted by the income shifting related to the reduction in the additional rate of income tax to 45p in April 2013. We expect growth of around 7 per cent in SA receipts in 2015-16, despite that one-off boost to 2014-15. This reflects around £2 billion from previously announced measures on partnerships and accelerated payments. In the latter, taxpayers will have to pay disputed tax much earlier if HMRC wins a tax legal case. Receipts related to accelerated payments were around £150 million higher than expected in 2014-15. We have assumed that this was a timing effect, so higher receipts in 2014-15 will mean lower receipts in subsequent years. With the final SA payment on 2014-15 liabilities paid in 2015-16, we also expect receipts to be boosted by the strong growth in self-employment in 2014 and that rising profits should boost dividend and partnership income.

4.30 SA receipts are expected to rise by 60 per cent between 2014-15 and 2020-21, almost double the 32 per cent growth in public sector current receipts as a whole. The baseline forecast assumes continued growth in incomes from self-employment, dividend and property. The additional growth in SA receipts relative to overall receipts is driven by the measures announced in this Budget and previously and by a recovery in receipts from savings income. Receipts will be boosted as interest rates rise over the forecast period. This effect will be accentuated by the Budget 2015 measures on savings tax. With the TDSI (tax deduction scheme for interest) mechanism switched off, any remaining liabilities on savings income will be collected through SA or PAYE coding adjustments. Previously announced measures such as those on partnerships should also continue to boost receipts, although the yield from accelerated payments declines in the final years of the forecast period because the policy brings forward receipts.

4.31 Abstracting from the forestalling related to the rise in dividend tax, measures in this Budget are expected to boost receipts by £2.2 billion in 2017-18, rising to £4.3 billion by 2020-21. The abolition of the dividend tax credit and the introduction of a £5,000 dividend tax-free allowance raises SA receipts by around £2.9 billion by 2020-21. Other policies such as the change in the rules on non-domicile status, HMRC compliance measures and the restriction on residential landlords' deductions from taxable income, all have rising yields over the forecast period. Based on the experience of the introduction in the additional rate of income tax of 50p for incomes over £150,000, we assume that forestalling related to the newly

announced rise in dividend tax will boost SA receipts (relating to 2015-16 liabilities) by £2.6 billion in 2016-17, with lower receipts in the next two years. The yields from many of the policy measures expected to boost SA receipts over the forecast period are highly uncertain, as described in more detail in Annex A.

Table 4.8: Key changes to the income tax and NICs forecast since March

	£ billion				
	Forecast				
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
March forecast	283.7	305.8	321.9	338.2	359.2
July forecast	285.1	310.6	323.8	343.2	364.1
Change	1.4	4.7	2.0	5.0	4.9
	Underlying OBR forecast changes				
Total	1.7	2.2	2.3	2.0	1.4
(by economic determinant)					
Average earnings	0.1	0.3	-0.4	-0.9	-1.3
Employee numbers	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.9
Inflation	0.0	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.6
SA determinants	-0.3	-0.5	-0.2	-0.3	-0.1
Other economic determinants	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2
(by other category)					
Outturn PAYE and NICs receipts	2.6	2.8	2.9	3.0	3.1
Other IT receipts	-0.7	-0.6	-0.5	-0.6	-0.6
Outturn SA receipts	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Revisions to costings	-0.3	-0.4	-0.3	-0.3	-0.9
Other modelling and receipts changes	-0.5	-0.5	-0.5	-0.4	-0.5
	Changes due to Government decisions				
Scorecard measures	-0.1	1.0	-2.3	1.3	3.1
of which:					
Personal allowance and higher rate threshold	0.0	-1.2	-1.4	-1.4	-1.5
Pensions tax relief	-0.1	0.3	0.4	1.0	1.3
Dividend tax	0.0	2.7	-0.4	1.8	2.9
Landlords measures	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.4	0.6
Employment allowance	0.0	-0.5	-0.6	-0.6	-0.6
Other	0.0	-0.3	-0.5	0.2	0.3
Indirect effects of Government decisions	-0.2	1.5	2.0	1.7	0.5

VAT

4.32 Accrued VAT receipts increased by 4.6 per cent in 2014-15, a little faster than the 4 per cent growth in nominal consumer expenditure, which accounts for over two-thirds of the tax base. VAT receipts were also boosted by a rise in the proportion of consumer spending subject to the standard rate of VAT, helped by strong growth in sales of durable goods such as new cars. The VAT gap – the difference between the theoretical level of VAT payments and actual receipts received by HMRC – is estimated to have fallen in 2014-15.

4.33 We expect the growth in VAT receipts to slow to 4.1 per cent in 2015-16, in part due to weaker growth in nominal consumer spending. This reflects the current very low level of inflation, since we expect growth in real consumer spending in 2015 to be similar to 2014.

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We also assume that the standard rated share of consumer spending and the VAT gap will be flat. Thereafter, we expect VAT receipts to fall slightly as a share of GDP, from 6.2 per cent in 2015-16 to 6.0 per cent in 2020-21. This reflects the effect of spending cuts on the VAT paid by government and our forecast that the standard rated share will fall as households spend relatively more on housing costs, which are not subject to VAT.

4.34 Compared with our March forecast, VAT receipts are higher by between £1 billion and £2 billion a year from 2015-16. This reflects a combination of the higher receipts and lower VAT gap in 2014-15 being pushed through the forecast, slightly stronger nominal consumer spending growth and the HMRC compliance measures. We have also adjusted the VAT forecast to allow for the bringing forward of new car sales to avoid the new regime for vehicle excise duties.

Table 4.9: Key changes to the VAT forecast since March

	£ billion				
	Forecast				
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
March forecast	114.3	117.7	121.4	125.9	131.1
July forecast	115.9	119.2	123.1	127.9	132.9
Change	1.6	1.5	1.7	2.0	1.7
	Underlying OBR forecast changes				
Total	1.7	1.2	1.7	1.5	0.7
of which:					
Household spending	0.6	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.1
Latest receipts	1.2	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7
Standard rated share	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.1
Other determinants and modelling	-0.2	0.1	0.5	0.3	-0.1
	Changes due to Government decisions				
Scorecard measures	0.0	0.3	0.2	0.7	1.0
Indirect effects of Government decisions	-0.1	0.0	-0.2	-0.3	0.0

Onshore corporation tax

4.35 Receipts from onshore corporation tax (CT) in 2014-15 were £0.5 billion higher than our March forecast, with growth of 11.2 per cent on a year earlier despite a 2 percentage point cut in the main rate in April 2014. The sectoral split of receipts growth implies stronger profitability in the financial and life assurance sectors. Receipts also benefited from strong payments on 2013 profits from smaller industrial and commercial companies.

4.36 Growth in onshore CT receipts is expected to slow in 2015, partly reflecting the cut in the main rate to 20 per cent in April 2015 and the increase in the annual investment allowance to £500,000 until December 2015. Compared to March, our pre-measures forecast is down by an average of £0.3 billion a year over the forecast, reflecting higher tax-deductible investment and a downward revision to payments expected from smaller industrial and commercial companies on their 2014 profits in light of receipts so far received.

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4.37 Our pre-measures forecast assumed that onshore CT would fall gradually from 2.3 per cent of GDP in 2015-16 to 2.0 per cent by 2020-21. Receipts are being affected by strong growth in investment, which increases the use of capital allowances, and by the continued high level of trading losses being carried forward and used against taxable profits in the financial sector.

4.38 The measures on corporation tax announced in this Budget have a marked effect on the profile of receipts over the forecast period. They raise receipts by £3.5 billion in 2017-18, but take off £2.4 billion by 2020-21. The main measures include:

- a cut in the main rate of corporation tax to 19 per cent in April 2017 and to 18 per cent in April 2020;
- a permanent increase in the annual investment allowance (AIA) to £200,000 a year;
- restrictions to controlled foreign company reliefs; and
- changes to corporation tax payment dates for large industrial, commercial and financial companies.

4.39 Of the two main tax cuts, the reduction in the main rate of corporation tax is expected to reduce receipts by £2.4 billion by 2020-21, while the AIA will cost around £0.5 billion by 2020-21. The costing for the cut in the main rate allows for an expected increase in profit shifting towards the UK and the implications of increased incentives to become incorporated. The AIA provides a 100 per cent capital allowance for business capital expenditure, deductible against profits chargeable to corporation tax. This allowance includes plant and machinery, but excludes expenditure on cars. The AIA temporarily stands at £500,000 until the end of 2015. It would have then reverted to £25,000. We have made small upward revisions to our business investment forecast to reflect the reductions in the post-tax cost of capital that will result from the main rate and AIA measures (see Box 3.3).

4.40 The Government's decision to move corporation tax payment dates forward to the third month of the accounting year from April 2017 boosts receipts in 2017-18 and 2018-19 by £4.2 billion and £2.8 billion respectively. This reflects receipts being brought forward from later years, providing a one-off boost to receipts that is not subsequently reversed. The National Accounts scoring of this measure is subject to uncertainty as Eurostat guidance indicates that revenues that are recorded on a cash basis – such as corporation tax – should be time-adjusted. The ONS currently have no plans to change their treatment of corporation tax, but if they did decide to do so this would change outturns, the baseline forecast and remove the scoreable yield from this measure. There is also uncertainty about how companies will respond to the £7 billion hit to cash flow. Absent any behavioural response, it would reduce companies' cash holdings by this amount permanently.

4.41 The Budget announced the introduction of a new surcharge tax on the profits of banking groups arising after 1 January 2016. This tax is expected to be treated as a separate stream of receipts and so is not included in the corporation tax figures here. This measure is

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expected to increase receipts by around £1.2 billion a year from 2017-18 onwards. With the reductions in the bank levy staggered between 2016 and 2021, the reduction in the bank levy reaches £1.2 billion by 2020-21.

Table 4.10: Key changes to the onshore corporation tax forecast since March

	£ billion				
	Forecast				
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
March forecast	42.3	42.9	44.0	44.8	46.0
July forecast	42.5	42.8	47.2	45.4	43.4
Change	0.2	-0.2	3.2	0.6	-2.6
	Underlying OBR forecast changes				
Total	0.2	-0.6	-0.8	-0.8	-0.8
of which:					
Industrial and commercial company profits	0.2	-0.3	-0.3	-0.2	-0.1
Industrial and commercial company investment	-0.1	-0.2	-0.3	-0.3	-0.4
Other economic determinants	-0.1	-0.1	0.0	0.0	-0.1
Latest receipts data	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1
Modelling and costings updates	0.3	0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.2
	Changes due to Government decisions				
Scorecard measures	0.1	0.1	3.5	1.0	-1.8
of which:					
Main rate cut to 19 per cent in April 2017 and to 18 per cent in April 2020	0.0	0.0	-0.6	-1.6	-1.8
Increase in the AIA to £200,000	0.0	-0.1	-0.5	-0.6	-0.6
Bringing forward payments for large groups	0.0	0.0	4.2	2.8	0.1
Other	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4
Indirect effects of Government decisions	-0.1	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.1

UK oil and gas revenues

4.42 UK oil and gas revenues were £0.5 billion lower than our March forecast in 2014-15, reflecting higher than expected petroleum revenue tax (PRT) repayments at the end of the financial year. Receipts are expected to fall by a further £1.5 billion (around 70 per cent) in 2015-16 to just £0.7 billion, reflecting the sharp fall in oil and gas prices in the second half of 2014. This compares with receipts of just under £11 billion four years earlier.

4.43 Compared to March, our forecast for oil and gas revenues is little changed with receipts expected to be lower by £0.1 to £0.2 billion a year. This mainly reflects lower gas prices, which are assumed to be between 2p and 4p a therm lower than we had assumed in March. Gas prices are based on futures prices to the end of 2017 and then held flat. Oil prices use the same methodology but are little changed from our previous forecast. Our projections for production and expenditure by the industry are consistent with those published in Table 4.11 in the March 2015 *EFO*, apart from exploration and appraisal expenditure which we now expect to fall by £25 million a year.

4.44 As we noted in March, the judgments underlying the oil and gas revenues forecast are particularly uncertain. These judgements include the extent to which the much lower oil and

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gas price environment will affect production and expenditure in the industry and how much the introduction of a new investment allowance and the cut to the supplementary charge and PRT rates announced in March 2015 will provide an offset by boosting post-tax returns on oil and gas extraction. The instalment payments on 2015 profits due in July and October will provide useful information on the extent to which revenues have been affected.

Stamp duties

4.45 Stamp duty land tax (SDLT) is forecast to rise strongly over the forecast period from £10.9 billion in 2014-15 to £18.9 billion in 2020-21. The strong growth reflects the combination of tax rate thresholds that are fixed in cash terms with a 19 per cent rise in residential property transactions and a 34 per cent rise in house prices.

4.46 Compared with our March forecast, SDLT receipts are expected to be £1.1 billion higher in 2015-16 but £0.7 billion lower by 2019-20. Residential property transactions were higher than expected at the end of 2014-15, which we expect to persist in the early years of the forecast. But we then expect transactions to converge to a similar long-run trend as in March, so the upward revision diminishes over the forecast period. Lower house prices relative to our March forecast reduce receipts by around £1.2 billion in 2019-20. Revisions to our commercial property forecasts broadly offset, with prices up a little – reflecting higher consensus expectations of capital value growth – and transactions lower.

Table 4.11: Key changes to the SDLT forecast since March

	£ billion				
	Forecast				
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
March forecast	10.4	11.8	13.8	16.0	18.0
July forecast	11.5	12.6	13.9	15.7	17.3
Change	1.1	0.7	0.1	-0.4	-0.7
	Underlying OBR forecast changes				
Total	1.1	0.8	0.2	-0.3	-0.7
of which:					
House prices	0.0	-0.2	-0.6	-1.0	-1.2
Residential property transactions	0.6	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.0
Commercial property prices	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Commercial property transactions	0.0	0.0	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1
Modelling and receipts outturns	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.5

Taxes on capital

4.47 Capital gains tax (CGT) receipts increased by £1.6 billion in 2014-15 (around 42 per cent), boosted by the 13 per cent rise in equity prices in the previous year. CGT is highly geared to changes in equity prices, since around three-quarters of the chargeable gains are related to financial assets and CGT is only charged on the gain rather than the disposal price. Prior to the policy announcements in the Budget, we expected capital gains tax receipts to rise by an average of 11 per cent a year over the forecast period, driven by rising equity prices.

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4.48 Compared to our March forecast, CGT receipts have been revised up from 2016-17 onwards by between £0.3 and £0.5 billion. This reflects the announcements in the Budget on the avoidance by private equity and hedge funds and the changes to non-domicile status. We have incorporated a central estimate of the yield from these measures in the forecast, but the behavioural responses are highly uncertain. Abstracting from measures, revenues would be slightly lower than in March reflecting the lower path for equity and house prices over much of the forecast period.

4.49 On a pre-measures basis, inheritance tax receipts were expected to rise by an average of around 9 per cent a year between 2015-16 and 2020-21. This reflected the further rises in house prices, equity prices and the stock of household cash deposits expected over the forecast period, as well as the effect of the nil-rate band being frozen until April 2018. The share of estates subject to inheritance tax was expected to rise from 6.5 per cent in 2014-15 to 11.3 per cent by 2020-21.

4.50 The introduction of a main residence nil-rate band transferable to a spouse or civil partner on death from April 2017, alongside the freeze in the nil rate band until the end of 2020-21, is expected to reduce receipts by £0.9 billion by 2020-21. We now expect inheritance tax receipts to increase by 5.4 per cent a year on average between 2017-18 and 2020-21. The share of estates subject to inheritance tax is expected to rise to 8.2 per cent in 2016-17 but then to fall back to 6.6 per cent by 2020-21 as the policy change significantly reduces the proportion of estates that would have been expected to become subject to relatively small amounts of inheritance tax as house price inflation and other factors brought the value of their assets into paying inheritance tax.

Fuel duties

4.51 The volume of fuel clearances is on a long-term downward trend, reflecting the increasing fuel efficiency of motor vehicles. Total clearances fell 8.4 per cent in the decade to 2014-15, with lower petrol clearances more than offsetting a rise in diesel clearances.

4.52 The £2.4 billion rise in fuel duty receipts expected between 2015-16 and 2020-21 is more than accounted for by uprating rates in line with RPI inflation, in line with the Government's stated policy assumption. This adds £4.1 billion to receipts in 2020-21. As we set out in Box 4.2 of our March *EFO*, that uprating assumption would have been a poor guide to the actual path of fuel duty rates during the last Parliament. Our forecast for fuel duties is around £0.1 billion a year higher than in March.

Alcohol and tobacco duties

4.53 Alcohol duty is expected to increase from £10.7 billion in 2015-16 to £12.8 billion in 2020-21. Within this total, receipts from wine and spirits are expected to increase by £1.3 billion and £0.7 billion respectively. Our forecast for alcohol duties is little changed since March. It reflects the Budget measures to tackle illicit alcohol, which boost receipts by around £250 million a year towards the end of the forecast period.

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4.54 Tobacco duties are expected to fall by £0.2 billion to £9.1 billion in 2015-16, despite the RPI plus 2 per cent rise in duty in March 2015. Cigarette clearances have trended down, thanks in part to the recent above-RPI increases in duty, changing attitudes to smoking, policies (such as the display ban) and the growing popularity of e-cigarettes. We expect receipts from tobacco duty to rise by £0.4 billion between 2015-16 and 2020-21.This is little changed since March. It reflects the Budget measures to tackle illicit tobacco, which boosts the forecast by around £0.1 billion a year.

Other taxes

4.55 **Business rates** are calculated by multiplying the rateable value of non-domestic property by the multiplier (which is uprated in line with RPI inflation). Receipts of business rates are close to the March forecast, reflecting only small changes to our RPI inflation forecast.

4.56 Receipts from **council tax** are expected to be slightly higher than in our March forecast. These changes are explained in more detail in the expenditure section of this chapter. Changes in council tax receipts are offset within the locally financed expenditure forecast and are therefore neutral for borrowing.

4.57 **Environmental levies** include levy-funded spending policies such as the renewables obligation and contracts for difference, feed-in tariffs, the carbon reduction commitment, capacity markets and the warm homes discount. The majority of these schemes (apart from the carbon reduction commitment) are classified as tax and spending by the ONS and so are neutral for borrowing. Environmental levies are expected to rise from £6.0 billion in 2015-16 to £13.6 billion in 2020-21. The steep rise over the forecast period largely reflects the expected rise in electricity generation from renewable sources.

4.58 We have revised up several of these levy-funded spending policies since March with the largest revision relating to the renewables obligation (RO). Deployment under the RO is likely to be higher than previously assumed, given greater numbers of energy projects ahead of the closure of the RO in 2017. Developments in technology efficiency and reductions in the costs of technology will also boost spending. Compared with our March forecast, RO spending will be over £1 billion higher from 2018-19 onwards. The Government has announced that it intends to close the RO to onshore wind a year earlier in 2016. There are a number of uncertainties about how this change would affect deployment and so we have made no adjustment to forecast expenditure. Lower projections of wholesale electricity prices have also affected our contracts for difference forecasts.

4.59 We have also revised upwards the forecast for feed-in tariffs to allow for higher than expected levels of deployment. Our forecast for the capacity markets scheme now also includes an estimate of the capacity market auction in December 2015 and has therefore increased by over £0.5 billion in 2019-20.

4.60 Growth in **insurance premium tax (IPT)** receipts has been relatively flat since the increase in the standard rate to 6 per cent in January 2011, with a fall of 1.3 per cent between 2011-12 and 2014-15. On a pre-measures basis, receipts are expected to grow by 1.9 per cent a

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year on average between 2015-16 and 2020-21, reflecting growth in consumer spending. The Budget measure to increase the standard rate of IPT – which accounts for around 92 per cent of tax liabilities – to 9.5 per cent is expected to increase receipts by around £0.5 billion in 2015-16 and roughly £1.5 billion a year thereafter. This estimate includes a small adjustment to reflect the expected reduction in demand for insurance products as a result of higher premiums.

4.61 **Air passenger duty** receipts are expected to rise from £3.1 billion in 2015-16 to £3.8 billion in 2020-21. This reflects duty rate rises and growth in passenger numbers. Our forecast is little changed since March.

4.62 **Vehicle excise duty** (VED) is levied annually on road vehicles and is based on the carbon emissions produced by different types of vehicles. Our pre-measures forecast is around £0.1 billion a year lower than in March, reflecting lower outturn receipts in 2014-15.

4.63 The VED reforms announced in the Budget will create a new tax structure for vehicles purchased from 2017-18 onwards. Cars purchased before April 2017 will still pay existing rates of VED. We expect the measure to boost receipts by £0.4 billion in 2017-18, and by up to £1.4 billion in 2020-21 as more new cars flow into the system.

4.64 Receipts from the **climate change levy** (CCL) are between £0.3 and £0.5 billion higher in each year from 2015-16 onwards, compared with our March forecast. This revision is more than explained by the announcement in the Budget that the CCL exemption for electricity generated from renewable sources will be removed. We had reduced our pre-measures forecast for CCL (excluding carbon price floor) to allow for greater use of the exemption as the share of electricity generated from renewable sources (both domestic and overseas) increases.

4.65 Climate change levy receipts are expected to rise sharply from £1.6 billion in 2014-15 to £2.3 billion in 2015-16, then flatten off over the next two years before declining to £1.9 billion by the end of the forecast period. This primarily reflects the profile for receipts from the carbon price floor. The rise in receipts in 2015-16 reflects the sizeable rise in carbon price support rates. As a result of the Budget 2014 measure, CPS rates are assumed to be fixed over the rest of the forecast period. The combination of fixed rates and lower emissions reduces carbon price floor receipts over the forecast. Our projection for lower emissions assumes a rising share of gas (rather than coal) in electricity generation.

4.66 **Bank levy** receipts are expected to fall from £3.7 billion in 2015-16 to £2.2 billion in 2020-21. This mainly reflects the graduated cuts in the bank levy rate from 0.21 per cent to 0.1 per cent by 2021 announced in this Budget. (The Government has also introduced an 8 per cent tax surcharge on banks' profits, described in paragraph 4.41)

4.67 Receipts from the bank levy have been difficult to forecast since its introduction in January 2011. The tax base – specific types of bank liability – has fallen away more quickly than expected. In light of recent announcements from some UK banks, we have maintained our assumption that banks will continue to shrink their balance sheets in the three years to

2017. We have also allowed for an increased level of double taxation relief, resulting from the rise in bank levies in a number of countries in the Euro area. This reduces bank levy receipts by around £250 million a year from 2016-17.

4.68 **VAT refunds** to central government are neutral for borrowing, as they are offset within spending. The forecast for VAT refunds largely reflects the path of government procurement and investment. VAT refunds have been revised in line with the change to the DEL profile. The higher path for DEL has pushed up VAT refunds by an average of £0.7 billion from 2016-17 onwards.

4.69 Our forecast for **BBC licence fee** receipts has been revised up by around £0.1 billion a year from 2016-17 onwards, reflecting a small increase in our assumption of the proportion of households who are licence fee payers. This partly reverses a larger downward change we made in March. Our forecast for licence fee receipts is not affected by the Budget decision to stop reimbursing the BBC for the cost of free TV licences for over-75s.

Other receipts

4.70 **Interest and dividend** receipts capture the interest income on the government's stock of financial assets, which includes student loans and holdings related to financial sector interventions. As set out in March, the financial asset sales planned by the Government this year will reduce interest and dividend receipts. The announcement of further sales of Lloyds and Royal Mail shares since our March forecast will mean dividend income foregone. This reduces the forecast by around £0.3 billion from 2016-17 onwards. Our pre-measures forecast does not assume dividend payments from RBS, so the announcement that the Government plans to sell three-quarters of its stake in RBS has not had a knock-on effect to this element of the receipts forecast.

4.71 The accrued interest on student loans is expected to rise rapidly over the forecast period, given the rise in the stock of loans. The Budget announcement that maintenance grants will be replaced with loans for all full-time higher education students from the 2016-17 entry cohort will add over £500 million to accrued interest by 2020-21.

4.72 Our forecast for **gross operating surplus (GOS)** comprises general government depreciation and public corporations' gross operating surplus (PCGOS). We have reduced our pre-measures forecast for GOS by around £0.2 billion a year, reflecting latest outturn data. Our forecast for GOS also reflects the net effect of two measures announced in the Budget, which affect GOS because they affect levels of rent income for local authorities' Housing Revenue Accounts, which are classified as public corporations in the National Accounts. These are the measures to reduce social sector rents and to require higher income social housing tenants to pay market rents. The estimated net effect of these two measures is to increase PCGOS initially by £0.1 billion in 2017-18, but then to reduce PCGOS by £0.2 billion by 2020-21.

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