

UK Rates Watch

Finding the right balance (sheet)

BoE reserves to amount to £580-610bn by end-2026

We expect banks reserves at the BoE to amount to around £640bn by end-2025 and £580bn by end-2026, if QT continues at a £100bn/year pace from October, from £689bn currently (Exhibit 1). An alternative scenario with a QT pace reduction to passive-only from October 2025 would imply around £640bn by end-2025 and £610bn by end-2026. Both forecasts assume a steady transition towards a repo-led reserve demand operating framework, where the decline in reserves due to the ongoing QT and TFSME unwind is steadied by reserve provision through STR and longer-term repo (for example, ILTR).

BoE repo to offset about half QT/TFSME reserve drain

As reserves become scarcer, UK bank usage of the BoE's repo has grown to around 45% of the QT and TFSME drain in recent quarters (Exhibit 2). Our estimates assume repo usage continuing to offset around half the drop in reserves until end-2026 (Exhibit 3 and Exhibit 4). As has been the case so far, the increase in BoE repo facility usage will not be gradual: banks' balance sheet restrictions around specific reporting dates will likely continue causing some volatility in repo take up (Exhibit 5 and Exhibit 6). The BoE is also still in the process of reviewing the calibration of the ILTR to ensure its effectiveness and attractiveness to support a potentially large provision of reserves (Exhibit 11).

BoE QT: to slow or not to slow

The Bank did not reveal much on the future QT pace in the May MPC press conference, with Dave Ramsden saying that the process to consider the next year's QT will "start soon". At the latest, the Bank should publish its process review in the August MPR and could implicitly signal a QT pace change, if it decided that would be appropriate (for example, if the BoE were to conclude that the effects of QE and QT were more symmetric than previously assumed). In addition, the conclusion of the ILTR calibration review will be important for the future success of the BoE's demand-driven reserve system; we judge it to be successful so far but wonder about the Bank's medium-term preferences for borrowed reserves distribution between STR and ILTR. For now, we do not pick a base case scenario for QT – the discussion deserves a separate Viewpoint, we think. But the seemingly one-sided nature of the outcome (we would be shocked if the pace increased from October) aligns with our constructive stance on long-end Gilts relative to swaps.

Sonia and repo market implications

Sonia flatlining at 5bp below Bank rate from April to December 2024 was striking but not unexplainable (Exhibit 7, Exhibit 8 and Exhibit 9). However, the steady liquidity drain meant that Sonia would resume its upwards drift at some point. We expect the Sonia/Bank rate spread to gradually tighten to 0bp, as the ongoing reserve reduction results in some banks seeking alternative liquidity sources in the Sonia market, with some also adjusting their deposit pricing higher in a more competitive environment.

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Timestamp: 16 May 2025 01:00AM EDT

16 May 2025

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Abbreviations:

BoE: Bank of England

QT: Quantitative Tightening

QE: Quantitative Easing

TFSME: Term Funding Scheme with
Additional Incentives for Small and Medium-
sized Enterprises

STR: Short-Term Repo

ILTR: Indexed Long-Term Repo

MPC: Monetary Policy Committee

MPR: Monetary Policy Report

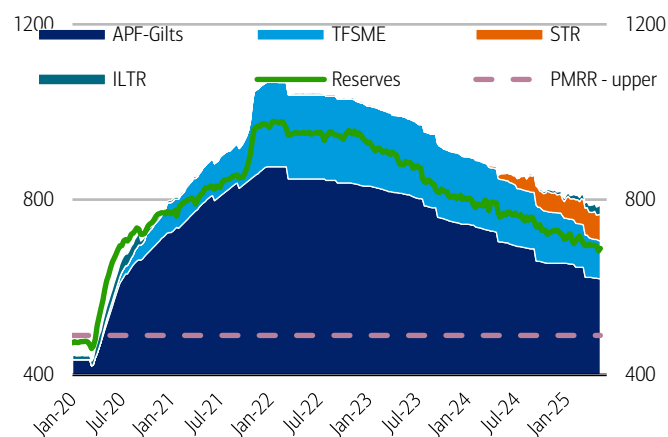
For all open and closed trade ideas, see the latest [Global Rates Weekly published on 9 May](#).

Any reluctance to use facilities, regardless of economic merit, might curb unconstrained take-up and market intermediation, driving shorter-term funding volatility. We see risks skewed to the upside for Sonia relative to Bank rate, i.e., Sonia exceeding Bank rate slightly, if the imbalance between reserve demand and supply is greater than expected.

Increasing funding demand by banks as liquidity declines, banks' balance sheet restrictions around specific reporting dates and the extent of perceived stigma around reliance on central bank funding, together with the persistently high Gilt supply outlook, are some of the upside risks to repo relative to Bank rate. Positioning is harder to predict, but a long bond stance by leveraged investors who sustain funding demand in repo could also contribute to upward pressures on repo-Sonia rate spread. On balance, we expect repo to continue trading with more volatility and at a positive spread to Bank rate, with risks skewed towards more spread widening (Exhibit 10).

Exhibit 1: BoE reserves and their backing assets*, £bn

STR & ILTR reserve provision dampening the QT & TFSME repayment drain



Source: BoE, Bloomberg, BofA Global Research. * Differential between the sum of facilities shown and reserves represents sterling Banknotes and other BoE sterling facilities.

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Exhibit 3: Reserves drop forecast due to TFSME and QT, £bn

Assuming BoE QT is continued at a £100bn/year pace from October

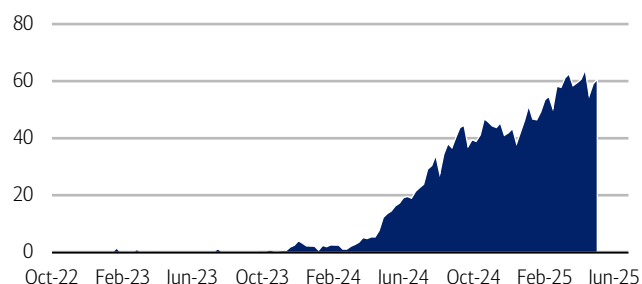
	2Q25	3Q25	4Q25	1Q26	2Q26	3Q26	4Q26
TFSME	-13	-16	-20	0	0	0	0
"Passive" QT	-30	-28	0	-22	0	-31	-10
"Active" QT	-3	-3	-12	-12	-12	-12	-13
Total	-46	-48	-32	-34	-12	-43	-23

Source: BoE, Bloomberg, BofA Global Research

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Exhibit 5: BoE STR facility usage, £bn

Averaging £60bn/week lately

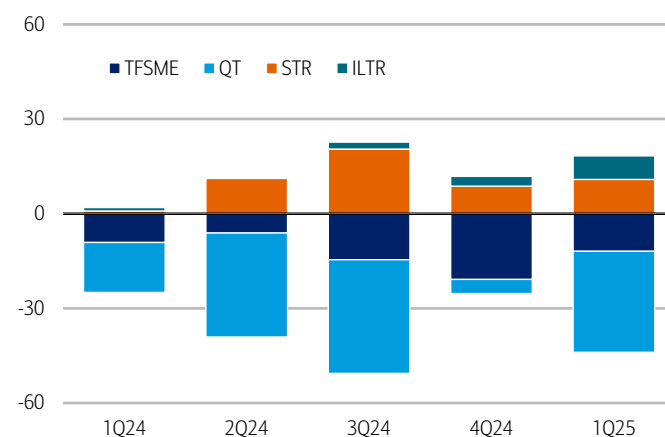


Source: BoE, BofA Global Research

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Exhibit 2: BoE reserve backing assets' quarterly changes, £bn

STR & ILTR balance increased by c. 45% of QT & TFSME balance fall lately*



Source: BoE, Bloomberg, BofA Global Research. *Lately = in the last three quarters on average.

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Exhibit 4: Reserves drop forecast due to TFSME and QT, £bn

Assuming BoE QT pace reduction to passive-only from October 2025

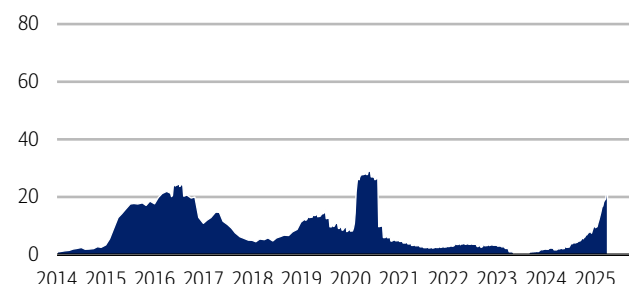
	2Q25	3Q25	4Q25	1Q26	2Q26	3Q26	4Q26
TFSME	-13	-16	-20	0	0	0	0
"Passive" QT	-30	-28	0	-22	0	-31	-10
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Total	-46	-48	-20	-22	0	-31	-10

Source: BoE, Bloomberg, BofA Global Research

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Exhibit 6: BoE ILTR facility usage, £bn

Approaching the £20bn outstanding mark

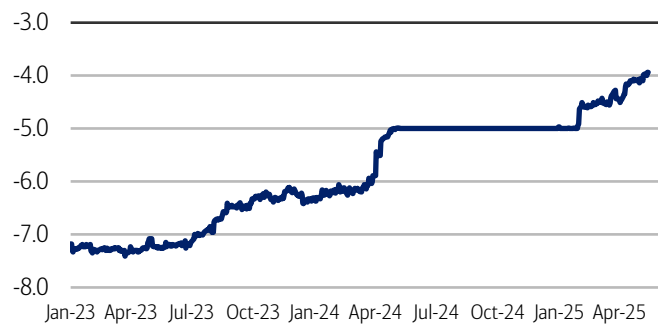


Source: BoE, BofA Global Research

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Exhibit 7: Sonia - Bank rate spread, bp

Flatlining at 5bp below Bank rate unprecedented, but not unexplainable

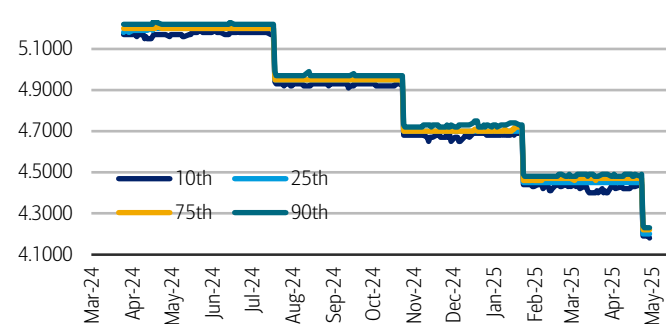


Source: BoE, BofA Global Research

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Exhibit 8: Sonia quartile distribution, %

Quartile distribution helps explain the Sonia flatlining in 2024

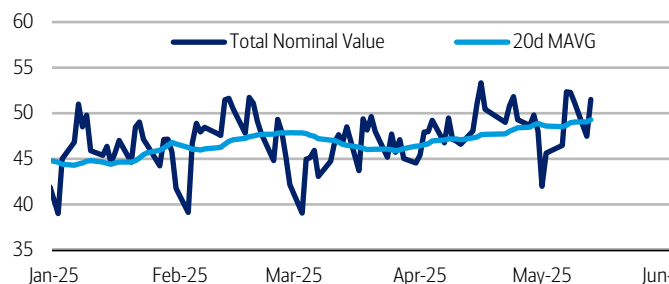


Source: BoE, BofA Global Research

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Exhibit 9: Sonia total nominal value, £bn

Relatively steady total nominal value

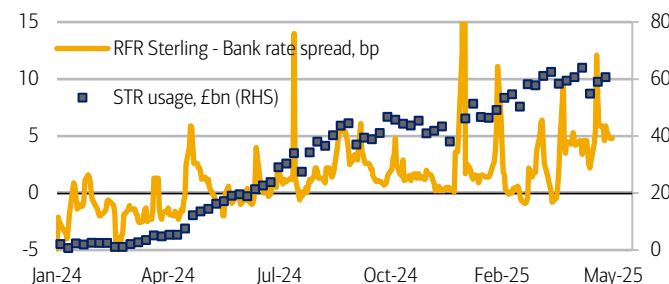


Source: BoE, BofA Global Research

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Exhibit 10: Repo vs. Bank rate and BoE STR usage

Repo mostly trading within 10bp range to Bank rate



Source: BoE, CME Group, BofA Global Research

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Exhibit 11: ILTR T&Cs and BoE consultation proposals

Consultation feedback will be analysed and used to finalise BoE's arrangements for transition, which will be announced in the first half of 2025

	Current	Consultation proposals
Term	6m	6m
Collateral	A, B & C	A, B & C
Settlement	T+2	T+2
Volume	Maximum size of operation subject to demand in the auction	Maximum size of operation subject to demand in the auction
Pricing	Minimum price against each collateral: Level A: Bank Rate +0bp Level B: Bank Rate +5bp Level C: Bank Rate +15bp	Minimum bid spreads will remain at 0bps, 5bps and 15bps over Bank Rate for Level A, B and C collateral, respectively.
	The clearing price for each collateral set can rise above these minimums depending on demand.	The clearing price for each collateral set can rise above these minimums depending on demand.
Total amount of reserves available	Maximum auction size is £25bn	Maximum auction size to be raised to £30bn
Quantity of reserves available at fixed minimum spreads	£5 billion per auction, ie the stock of reserves available at minimum spreads of £120 billion	Increase to £7-£10bn per auction, ie the stock of reserves available at minimum spreads £168bn-£240bn
Reserve supply curve	Not specified explicitly	A gentler upward sloping supply curve to help ensure that clearing spreads rise only gradually for quantities above what is available at minimum spreads

Source: BoE, BofA Global Research

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