

Ashbridge PARTNERS INSIGHTS

AUTUMN 2025

In the six months since our **last edition of Ashbridge Insights**, change and uncertainty have remained the key themes of the political and economic outlook. Having digested the 2024 Autumn Statement, we are set for another shake up at the end of November, as the government grapples with weak economic growth, the rising cost of government debt and a growing fiscal deficit.

Market commentators have consistently overestimated the speed and volume of base rate reductions since the peak of last year. We remain doubtful that the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee has further loosening in its gift and SWAP rates suggest that, at least for now, fixed rates have reached the bottom. With this in mind, locking into fixes now may be the right decision for many.

Get in touch today to find out if fixing is the right option for you.



In this edition of Ashbridge Insights, we report on a regional brewery and pub group that has engaged our services to refinance and restructure their debt, highlighting the competitive pressure we were able to bring to the process. On a similar theme, we ask if commercial loan borrowers are paying too much for their money and whether now is the right time to consider refinancing.

In Ashbridge Partners news, we introduce **CLA Finance**, a partnership we have established with the Country Land and Business Association (CLA), to provide a bespoke finance advisory service to 26,000 CLA members across England and Wales.

Finally, we consider what the political and economic situation might mean for interest rates and think ahead to what the Autumn Budget may bring.



Wadworth Brewery - a multigenerational family business

Established in 1875 by Henry Wadworth in the market town of Devizes, this business recently celebrated its 150th year, under the guidance of Managing Director and 5th generation of the family, Toby Bartholomew. The business has over 140 pubs across the South and West of England and, in 2023, it invested in a new state-of-the-art brewing facility on the outskirts of the town. This has improved efficiency, increased capacity and allowed the brewery to expand its range, with the well-known Wadworth 6X now joined by Folly Road craft beers.

Funding is an essential part of the jigsaw for Wadworth Brewery and the business engaged Ashbridge Partners to review the options and present a detailed proposal to the market. Competitive tenders were received, reviewed and assessed before we made our recommendations. The result was an interest margin reduction of 0.80%, which will save almost £1m over the term.

"From our initial meeting with Ashbridge Partners we have been impressed with their professionalism and efficiency in helping us to refinance our debt. They have guided us through the process and achieved an excellent result."

Toby Bartholomew, Managing Director, Wadworth & Co

Are You Paying Too Much for Your Money?

Base rate fluctuates over time

With nearly 30 years' experience in business and finance, I've witnessed firsthand how access to money and its cost fluctuates over time. When I began as a business consultant in 1996, the Bank of England (BOE) base rate hovered around 6% and for the next decade it largely stayed within the 4%–6% range.

In 2009, the BOE rate dropped sharply to 0.50%, and remained below 1.00% for the next 13 years, before a dramatic rise to 5.25% by the summer of 2024. At this stage, many borrowers found their debt servicing to be unsustainable, which necessitated the restructuring of loans and the sale of assets.

Interest margins expand and contract

When I moved into the commercial banking sector in 2001, loans were typically priced at 2 – 2.5% over base. However, in subsequent years competitive pressure in the banking market saw margins reduce by up to 50%. This all changed with the financial crisis of 2008, which triggered a fundamental shift and led to tougher lending criteria and a heightened focus on affordability, coupled with significantly higher interest margins.

Is Now the Right Time to Refinance Your Commercial Mortgages?

Savings are available if you refinance now

Thankfully, renewed competition in the current market means that many deals brokered before 2023 are now ripe for refinance at significantly lower interest margins (as the example of Wadworth Brewery illustrates).

Ashbridge Partners is actively helping clients refinance and restructure onto better terms. If you have substantial debt, now is a smart time to review your facilities.



Ashbridge Partners News

We are delighted to be working in partnership with the Country Land and Business Association (CLA) to deliver CLA Finance, a new member service designed to provide independent finance and mortgage advice to CLA members.

The CLA represents approximately half of the landowners of England and Wales (by area) and we are proud to have been selected as their official finance advice partner.

Launched just four months ago, CLA Finance is already generating strong interest, with several cases underway. Through this service, Ashbridge Partners is helping CLA landowners access the full spectrum of finance solutions, from traditional lending to more specialist funding options.

We're pleased to be working alongside the CLA to support their members and look forward to building on this strong start.

[Learn more about CLA Finance](#)



What Now for Interest Rates?

The straight answer of course is that nobody knows! Experts and commentators have repeatedly been proved wrong, but our informed view is as follows.

The extended period of sub 1% base rate, between 2009 and 2022, was an exceptional time and these rates should now be consigned to history. The manufacture of cheap goods from China kept a lid on inflation during that period and the UK had a large pool of foreign labour from Europe and elsewhere to hold wages steady.

Brexit, the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine brought these favourable rates to an abrupt end and, since 2022, we have been forced to adjust to a more "normal" interest rate environment.

Conflict in Ukraine and the Middle East and higher tariffs have caused disruptions to the global supply chain and this in turn has exacerbated inflation. The level of indebtedness across western economies has reached historic highs and bond investors (i.e. those individuals, institutions and governments who invest their money into government debt) are demanding higher returns for the heightened risk.

At a UK level, the Liz Truss government of Autumn 2022 damaged our international reputation for fiscal management. As a result, our government debt costs (i.e. bond yields) are at a premium to other sovereign states of similar standing, such as the other economies in the G7.

Government bond yields are intrinsically linked to the cost of money in the real economy, so we take notice of their level when considering both what the base rate might be in future and what SWAP rates will be for setting fixed rate mortgages and loans.

Given this economic and political backdrop, we do not see much scope for further loosening, so now may be a good time to lock into current fixed rates.

Talk to us about whether fixing is the right option for you.



The Autumn Statement

The tax increases of 2024 were meant to draw a line in the sand and address the budget deficit and yet, here we are again, looking at further tax increases and / or spending cuts targeting somewhere between £20bn to £40bn.

Our client base has already been heavily impacted by changes to inheritance tax, the removal of the non-dom regime, VAT on school fees and increases to employers NIC and minimum wages. The increased tax burden has prompted many individuals and businesses we work with to rein back on investment or even move elsewhere.

As we approach the Autumn Budget on 26th November, there is a great deal of speculation as to where the tax shortfall will be found. Will the government ditch the pledge not to increase income tax, VAT or employee NIC or will we see a tightening of the net on wealth and inheritance? Perhaps it will need to be a combination of all the above.

Whatever the outcome, it is likely that our clients will bear a large part of the burden and this will require further changes to long term financial plans. We would therefore recommend a comprehensive finance review and Ashbridge Partners is on hand to advise on the funding and restructuring options available. Do take this opportunity to plan strategically for your financial future.

How We Can Help

Ashbridge Partners advises and arranges funding of between £250k and

£50m+ for businesses, private individuals and property investors.

Products include:

- Commercial loans
- Residential mortgages
- Development loans
- Bridging finance

Our goal is simple: secure the most competitive, flexible funding for our clients' needs.

Get in touch to discover smart refinancing with Ashbridge Partners.



Mark Ashbridge, Managing Director

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...

Spring Insights 2025 ↗

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