

SECTION B

Read Figures 1 and 2 below and read extracts A and B before answering Question 6.

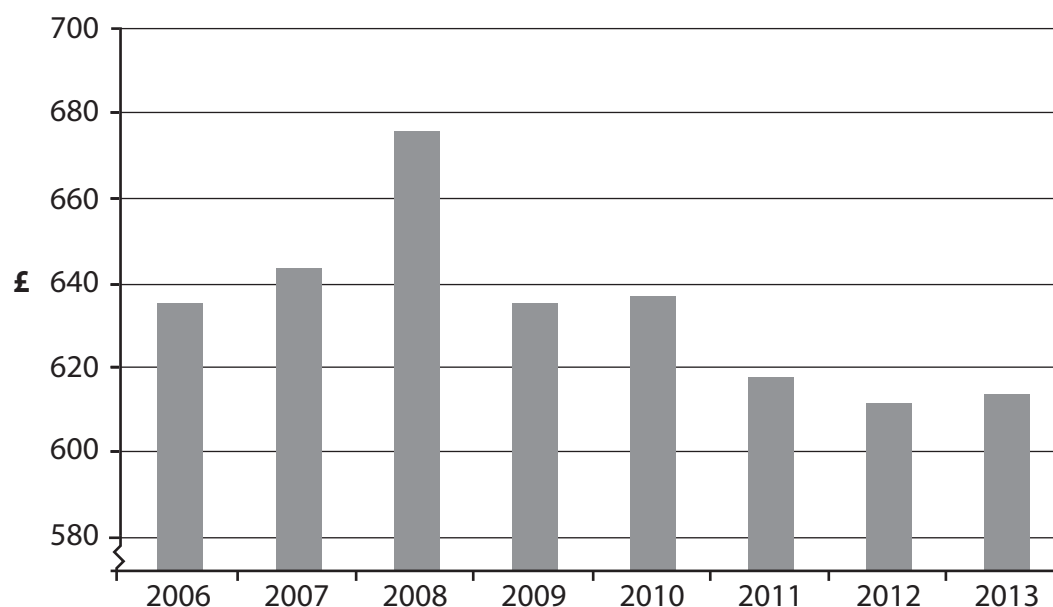
Answer ALL Question 6 (a) to 6 (e) and EITHER Question 6 (f) OR Question 6 (g).

You are advised to spend 1 hour and 5 minutes on this section.

Question 6

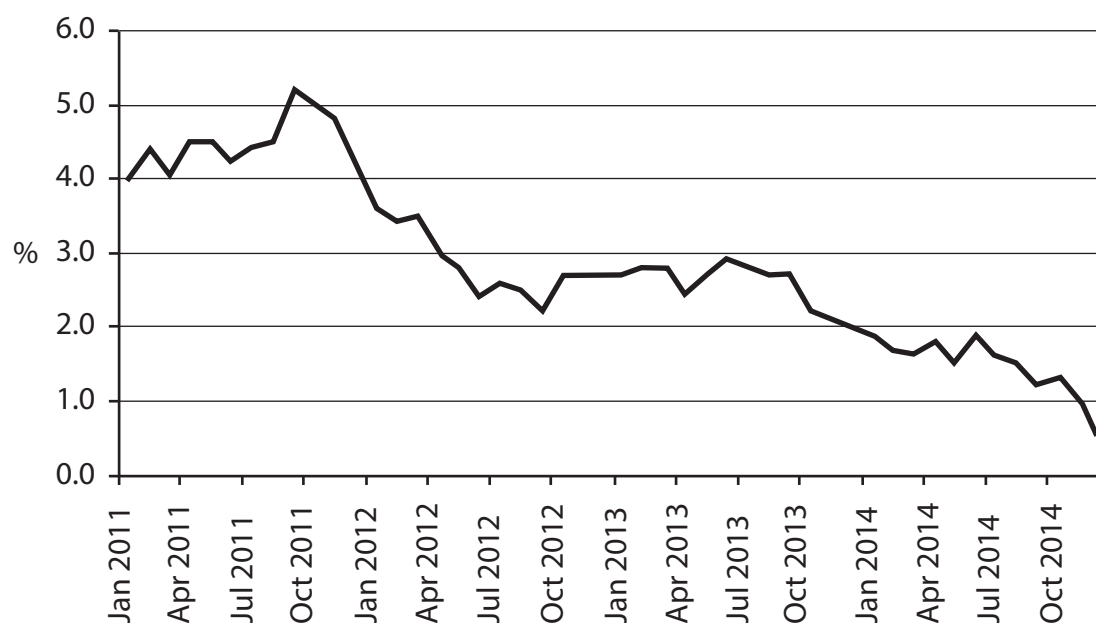
UK incomes, inflation and monetary policy

Figure 1 – UK average weekly household real income



(Source: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/family-spending/family-spending/2014-edition/rft-a44-final-2013.xls>)

Figure 2 – UK inflation rate as measured by percentage changes in the Consumer Price Index (CPI)



(Source: <http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/publications/Pages/inflationreport/2015/feb.aspx>)



Extract A**Britons should not fear rise in interest rates**

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Bank of England is prepared to raise interest rates "in the near future" if inflation increases, one of its senior policymakers has warned.

Kristin Forbes, a member of the MPC, said a rise in borrowing costs would also be necessary should household debt reach unhealthy levels. However, she stressed that this was not yet a cause for concern.

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With the UK's base rate of interest at 0.5% and inflation at a record low and expected to be negative, the MPC is currently under no pressure to raise interest rates, despite Britain's economic recovery.

UK inflation is being driven lower by the slump in global oil prices, which have roughly halved since summer 2014, and the Bank's governor Mark Carney warned earlier this month that a strong domestic economy would translate into higher UK inflation over the medium term. "The most likely next move in monetary policy is an increase in interest rates. The message is clear," Carney said.

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Forbes said that "even the more lagged effects of the rise in the value of the pound will likely peak in the first part of this year and also gradually fade. Inflation will then most likely bounce back.

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"Since interest rates take well over a year to be fully effective, they should be adjusted to respond to inflationary risks at that time horizon – when all of these effects have diminished – rather than respond to today's inflation."

(Source: adapted from <http://www.theguardian.com/money/2015/feb/24/britons-should-not-fear-rise-in-interest-rates-when-they-come-says-boe-member>)

Extract B**Deflation is bad news**

The problem with deflation is that once you have it you can't get rid of it. Central banks know what to do about inflation but they do not have the policy tools to deal with deflation when interest rates are almost as low as they can go. Just look at Japan, which had deflation in nine separate years from 1999-2012, with two additional years at zero, averaging minus 0.3%. The highest in any single year was minus 1.3% in 2013.

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In the European Union (EU) in 2008, at the start of the financial crisis, there were fears of deflation but at that time central banks had the ability to cut interest rates by nearly 5 percentage points. Those fears may now be coming true, with the EU experiencing deflation of 0.5% in 2015.

This was driven primarily by declines in energy prices, but there was also deflation in non-energy industrial goods and telecommunications. The collapse in the cost of shipping goods potentially suggests something deeper is going on and may lead to a more persistent form of deflation than Mark Carney has currently claimed.

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(Source: adapted from <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/comment/david-blanchflower/david-blanchflower-deflation-is-bad-news--and-britain-is-likely-to-be-next-to-get-it-10078832.html>)

