

UK Project Management Roundup



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INTRODUCTION

The summer here got off to its usual frantic start with many families embarking on the delivery stage of their major annual project – their holiday. We had fewer reports of failed projects, at least initially, as many families got away without major blockages on the road system and the airports seemed to cope with the sudden rise in numbers of passengers. Since then, problems have arisen but most of these are outside the control of holiday-makers. Road and rail access to Europe is severely disrupted by the attempts of large numbers of migrants to board trains and trucks using the Channel Tunnel.

Elsewhere, the project world rumbles on and despite this being the best time to release bad news, there is a surprising amount of good news to report. This comes from the Association for Project Management (APM) and Crossrail. This is not to say that there is no bad news so High Speed 2 (HS2) comes under renewed scrutiny as does the national rail network. So let's look at the good news first...

APM ACTIVITIES



The Planning Specific Interest Group released their latest publication in July at a launch in London.

Work on the guide by the current authoring group began in October 2013. It was finished ahead of schedule and is on sale now. Lead author Paul Kidston said it was practical guide that aimed to bridge the gap between planning theory and practice. Simon Taylor, from HS2 and member of the authoring group, added it was a “catch-all guide” that was relevant to every sector. Both acknowledged that it was not

an answer on its own, but did provide a foundation to improve project management capability. It also provided an example of what good looks like.

More good news came from the Awards Judges who have completed their first round assessment of entries to the 2015 Awards. The Award Board released details of the finalists after a record entry across the 12 professional and 3 academic categories.

Leading practitioners and ground-breaking projects from a variety of organisations ranging from Crossrail to National Trust and Sky to the Met Office are competing for the highly-coveted APM Awards trophy on 2nd November in London.



The APM Awards sponsored by T-Systems recognises the invaluable contribution project management and project professionals make in all sectors of society for over 20 years. Alongside the finalists will be a selection of entries that have been merited as highly commended.

The annual PM Salary and Market Trends Survey 2015 report was released in May but has been attracting considerable interest. Since its launch, the report has achieved more than 5,000 downloads – marking it out as APM’s most successful digital publication to date.

The research saw more than 2,700 respondents take part, including a large proportion of non-APM members (42%). In addition, 8% of APM members participated in the survey, above the 6-7% average for salary surveys of this type produced by other professional bodies.



Conducted with career development partner Wellingtone the project professional salary survey allows for greater benchmarking, not only for project, programme and portfolio managers, but for employers too.

The survey reveals that the profession is in good health with 70% of respondents reporting organisational growth and 47% looking to recruit new members of staff.

This new-found confidence was also expressed by individuals with one in three participants feeling positive about the next 12 months and more than three quarters (77%) reporting high levels of job satisfaction.

The survey provides a snapshot of the wider UK project management community looking at salary and market trends for individuals and organisations. Closely linked to the Awards announcement came news of a special report focusing on project teams who innovate and improve their approach to projects.

The report features four finalists shortlisted for APM's 2014 Project of the Year, all judged to have excelled in three key areas: project management, results, and innovation and lessons learned.

Overall winner Network Rail went to extraordinary lengths to repair storm-damaged track near Dawlish in Devon, in record time. To help do this, they deploying water cannons and flying drones. "We used drones to take aerial photos so we could ensure our water cannons were at the right pressure to remove the material without undermining the whole area," said Tom Kirkham, Network Rail project manager.

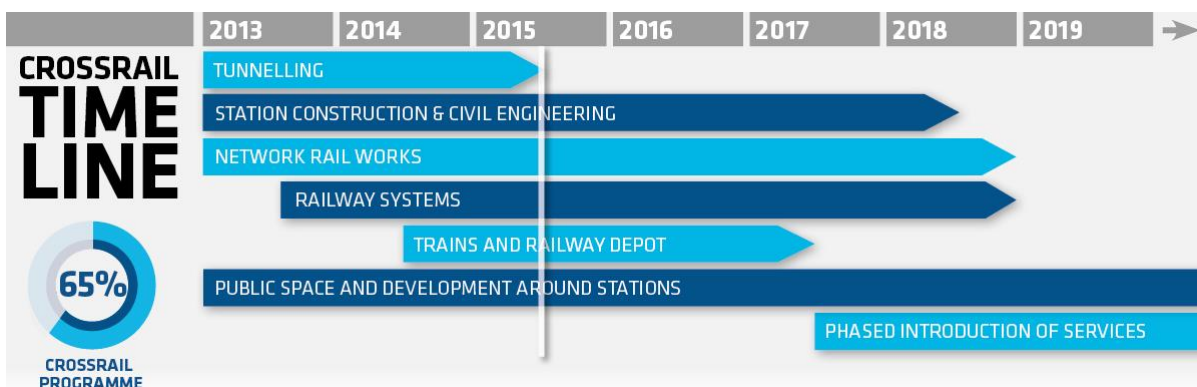
Other finalists, Thales UK, London Underground, United Utilities and 4Delivery Ltd used specially-equipped monitoring trains, mock tunnels and a 'buddy system' between designers and engineers to achieve the desired outcome. In each case innovative thinking played a vital role in the project's success.



All these reports can be downloaded from APM's website at www.apm.org.uk

CROSSRAIL

Big infrastructure projects often come in for a lot of criticism, from academics who challenge their business case to the average punter who wants the benefits, and wants them right now, but is not prepared to put up with any disruption. So it comes as a pleasant surprise that Crossrail seems to have overcome most of the classic problems with such problems – so much so that the House of Commons spending watchdog, the Public Accounts Committee has called it a 'textbook' example of how to run a complex infrastructure plan.



Crossrail has just completed the 26 mile tunneling phase of the project and Elizabeth and Victoria, Crossrail's last two tunnel boring machines, completed their final journeys at Farringdon marking the end of three years of tunneling. This big east-west breakthrough brings the Crossrail project a significant step forward in delivering London's new railway.

Since 2012, teams of over 10,000 men and women and hundreds of apprentices have been working to help create London's new underground tunnels. The tunneling has been highly successful despite the potential for disaster – in some cases there was less than a meter of clearance for the tunneling machines as they moved between existing constructions and other underground train tunnels. Crossrail has received about 500 claims for building damage, estimated to cost around £5.8 million, a remarkable achievement when considering the complexity of the tunneling, congested above ground space and the sheer scale of the machinery employed. The use of thousands of sensors mounted on buildings along the route has clearly been a great success. The £16 billion project remains on schedule, as the latest report from Crossrail shows. Entitled *Moving Ahead*, the quarterly report claims that the project is 65% complete.

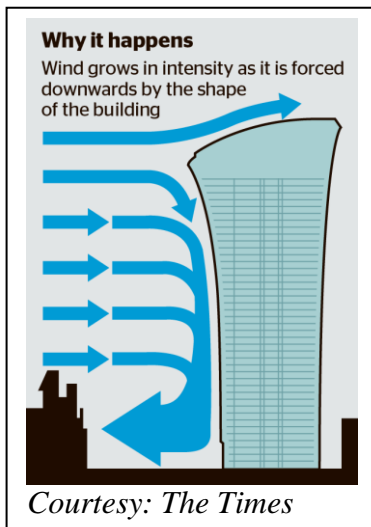
THE NOT SO GOOD NEWS

The rail industry has been in the firing line this past month with even more pressure on Network Rail over the speed of their project completion. Budget pressures have made life very difficult for the privatized but highly regulated provider of infrastructure. Their splendid reaction to the winter storm damage in 2014 seems to count for nothing as the new Government announced radical plans that will hand payment for track operations to the train operating companies. A further change is the devolution of power to individual route managers, giving them more say over track maintenance and commissioning of new work. Newspaper reports claim these changes are part of a longer term plan to break Network Rail. Against this background, Nicola Shaw, the head of High Speed 1, has been appointed to advise Government on how it should “approach the longer-term future and financing of Network Rail”.

These announcements have been followed by criticism of what is thought to have been a highly critical report by a senior civil servant on Network Rail's plan to improve rail infrastructure, which was costed at £38 billion as part of the 5 year funding plan. The report is believed to have been submitted at the end of 2014 and to have identified major risks in the £12 billion “enhancements” plan. The report is said to have note several cost overruns on major projects. This comes after the shelving of two very large electrification projects, on the Midland Main Line and on the Trans-Pennine routes. This latter hits the Chancellor of the Exchequer's plans for a Northern Powerhouse.

While HS1 may be the darling of the rail industry, its follow-on project, HS2 has had another financial hiccup. A block of 5 apartments and two offices near Euston Station, one of the main termini servicing the norther routes out of the capital, has recently been completed – good you might think! However, they will need to be demolished in 2017 to make way for the £50 billion high-speed railway. This will cost taxpayers an additional £6 million. Galling when you learn that there was an opportunity to purchase the empty site for only £1.6 million in 2012. The site had been offered to HS2 who initially agreed to purchase only to find they did not have the money to complete the deal.

CLOSING COMMENTS



I have had no response to my requests to learn who dreams up the weird names given to new buildings. These are mainly in the City so presumably, the finance boys spend their working lunches dreaming up new names. I can understand their reticence in being named as one building in particular is coming in for continuing criticism. Originally named the Walkie Talkie on account of its shape, it was later called the Walkie Scorchie as its shape focused the sun's rays which resulted in damage to cars and shop fronts.

Now, the shape is causing wind flows that affect people on the roadway and pavements as can be seen from the graphic, left.

And finally, again courtesy of the Times, but this time an inset to the Sunday edition, comes a special issue of the popular briefing sheet, *Raconteur*. There are many interesting articles in the 8 page pull-out but what caught my eye was the half page spread on APM that highlighted the very latest Competence Framework, just released, and downloadable from the APM website. What was good about this was its positioning, next to a page and a half spread on successful infrastructure projects ranging from the London Olympics to High Speed 1 and including Crossrail and the Thames Tideway Tunnel. I was not entirely sure that Heathrow Terminal 5 stood up to scrutiny as a successful infrastructure project but the others certainly gave a good platform for APM's strap line "**a world where all projects succeed**".

And that's how the project world looks in UK this month!

About the Author



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Miles Shepherd is an executive editorial advisor and international correspondent for PM World in the United Kingdom. He is also managing director for MS Projects Ltd, a consulting company supporting various UK and overseas Government agencies, nuclear industry organisations and other businesses. Miles has over 30 years' experience on a variety of projects in UK, Eastern Europe and Russia. His PM experience includes defence, major IT projects, decommissioning of nuclear reactors, nuclear security, rail and business projects for the UK Government and EU. Past Chair and Fellow of the Association for Project Management (APM), Miles is also past president and chair of the International Project Management Association (IPMA). He is currently Director of PMI's Global Accreditation Centre and the Chair of the ISO committee developing new international standards for Project Management and for Program/Portfolio Management. He was involved in setting up APM's team developing guidelines for project management oversight and governance. Miles is based in Salisbury, England and can be contacted at miles.shepherd@msp-ltd.co.uk.

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