

UK Project Management Round Up



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INTRODUCTION

The year is barely a month old yet there are many interesting developments in the project world and beyond. One striking feature of January has nothing to do with project but I draw your attention to the loss of many very famous and not so well known pop stars in January. Unless you live off grid, it is inconceivable that you missed the passing of **David Bowie**. A great innovator and adept at using psychology to change his delivery style, Bowie transformed the world of pop music – a feat similar to the delivery of a major programme. Less influential but much loved in their day are stars such as **Glen Frey** of The Eagles, **Paul Kantner** of Jefferson Airplane and **Dale Griffiths** of Mott the Hoople. The modern Project Manager might enjoy the music representative of these stars but should also look at how they led their fans and delivered value to them.

On a more prosaic level, there is news of defence projects, some projects in the cultural domain, academic projects and wildlife programmes.

CULTURAL DOMAIN



A project local to my base is the proposed tunnel to bypass Stonehenge (pictured left). The Government has proposed a £15 billion project to remove the traffic that runs past the Stones along the A303 and to help alleviate the congestion on this main road from London to the West Country. The plan involves a 1.8 mile long tunnel past Stonehenge.

The £17.5M contract with Highways England will see the joint venture between Atkins and Arup develop options to take to public consultation and ultimately a preferred route for the tunnel. Highways Agency Project Manager Andrew Alcorn

leads the first stage to open up a major pinch point on the long distance route to the South West.

The contract award was welcomed by the local Member of Parliament, John Glenn, but there is extensive opposition to the tunneling plan. Local residents seek a route that leads traffic away from the Stones and does not involve a tunnel, a virtually impossible task despite the desire to avoid damage to the rich archeology of the area. A route that links up with options to by-pass Salisbury and other local high traffic density areas seems more likely.

WILDLIFE PROJECT SUCCESS

One of the major problems in conservation is the impact of invasive species on local environments. In UK we have major problems with American Grey Squirrels which carry diseases that our native Red variety have no immunity to and Signal crayfish that are crowding out their smaller British cousins. And it is not just animals that cause problems: Japanese Knotweed causes extensive damage to roads, buildings, river banks and buried infrastructure, and is almost impossible to eradicate. Similarly plants such as Himalayan Balsam, rhododendrons and the like cause ecological damage.

In the face of such seemingly intractable problems, it comes as a pleasant surprise that invasive species that predate birds in the Sothern Atlantic have been eliminated. South Georgia is a British Overseas Territory with a huge population of elephant seals, penguins of various varieties and more than 50 million albatrosses, petrels and prions. The island was once a whaling station and visiting ships brought rats to the island while the company that ran the whale station introduced deer to provide meat. Both these species cause damage to the environment: rats predate the cliff nests while the deer consume the vegetation.

The rat cull project mounted by the South Georgia Heritage Trust cleared the island of rodents as reported in these pages last year. As reported in BirdLife, one of the many remarkable aspects of this project is that it has been undertaken by a small Scottish charity, the South Georgia Heritage Trust, based in Dundee, relying entirely on voluntary donations. Planning began in 2007, and the fieldwork was undertaken in three phases during 2011, 2013 and 2015, by an international team of the world's leading experts in eradication work, in often hostile conditions imposed by South Georgia's notoriously extreme and fickle weather.

More than 6000 reindeer were culled over a two year period and just 47 remained. These remaining beasts were hunted down. A single male was sighted last summer.

EDUCATION RELATED PROJECTS

It is surprising where you find reports of interesting projects. I was reading the annual report of my Alma Mater last week and noticed that they have made further developments in their project management related



offerings. I taught for many years of the Masters Specialist course as well as supervised students on their research projects so I was very interested to see that they have expanded their offering to cover the needs of the Nuclear Skills Academy in developing their Certificate of Nuclear Professionalism. This qualification helps overcome the national shortage of 'work-ready' graduates by teaching them skills including operational aspects of project management as well as front end skills such as commercial awareness and team leadership.



Elsewhere, the Vice Chancellor, Peter Horrocks (left, curtesy The Open University) drew attention to the amazing contribution the Open University (OU) has made in space. The recently concluded Rosetta Project landed a small vehicle on Comet 67P had a strong input from the OU, see the video at bit.ly/1EAsp2R.

Party as a result of the reputation built on the Rosetta success the OU has also been chosen to lead the Europlanet 2020 project. This €9.9 million project aims to integrate and support planetary science activities across Europe. The project is funded under the European Commission's Horizon 2020 programme; it was launched on 1st September 2015 and will run until 31 August 2019. The project is led by the Open University, UK, and has 34 beneficiary institutions from 19 European countries.

The OU is also involved in other space projects such as GAIA, measuring the positions of over a billion stars in our galaxy and beyond; EUCLID which is intended to map the geometry of the Dark Universe and BepiColumbo that will explore Mercury and launches in 2017. Quite a portfolio!

DEFENCE PROJECTS

The UK Press has reported widely on the problems faced by the Royal Navy on the Type 45 Destroyers. The Royal Navy commissioned 6 of these destroyers with the final one delivered at the end of 2010. Recently, the vessels have been hit by major power outages. Press speculation identifies problems with the Rolls Royce two WR-21 gas turbine main power units fitted to each Destroyer. Intercoolers and heat exhaust recovery systems are used to power the on-board electrics. If a turbine goes off line, the other turbine and two diesel generators take over power supply duties but according to reports, the turbines are under-powered and the system cannot cope with operational loads when one is off line.

The WR-21 turbines were new designs by Rolls Royce procured by the Ministry of Defence at the insistence of Mr Geoff Hoon, then the Defence under the Labour Government responsible for the procurement. BAE systems was the prime contractor and their preferred option was the US built LM2500 turbine but this was overturned by Mr Hoon, according to press reports. Rolls Royce were selected to

supply the turbines and 1000 jobs were maintained as a result, many of them in Derby, close to Mr Hoon's constituency.

This problem will require holes to be cut into the hulls of the warships to have new engines installed. It is not clear what engine design will replace the existing turbines.

This debacle will no doubt strengthen the hand of those in Whitehall who plan to impose an agency to oversee the £31 billion Successor programme which will build the replacement for the Royal Navy's Trident missile Vanguard Class submarines which form the UK's nuclear deterrent. Ministers are said to be determined avoid problems that have dogged previous major defence contracts. The Major Projects Authority is scrutinizing the Astute class submarine programme which has suffered problems with costs and schedule. Concerns over the nuclear reactors to power the Astute vessels have been raised amid claims that Rolls Royce are not capable of managing the remaining Astute deliveries and the Successor programme at the same time. Critics cite schedule problems with the new PWR3 propulsion units for the Successor fleet, due to skills shortages and an inability to recruit.

OTHER PROJECT NEWS

The skills shortage manifests itself in a variety of ways, and continues to cause problems in the project world. The latest is hitting nuclear projects with the Nuclear Safety Regulator being faced with leadership problems while its workload is increasing, due mainly to the number of safety cases for new and planned reactors. It also has to supervise the safe working of 15 working reactors. Leadership issues have been exacerbated by losses of key senior staff who have not yet been replaced while the incoming Chief Executive has not yet started work. There are also concerns that the Office of Nuclear Regulation (ONR) is understaffed to deal with the increase in activity caused by the expansion of Chinese, Japanese and French companies planning new reactors. ONR has acknowledged that it faces "demographic challenges" as engineers who built UK's early reactors retire and what young engineers there are go to foreign private employers such as EDF.

Not quite a skills shortage, but related to the power industry is the likelihood of major power outages hitting the domestic supply. Recent reports by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) highlight the need for multi-billion £ investment programmes to support power generation. Windfarms, solar farms and other means of generation are urgently needed and the gap between nuclear and conventional seems to be widening. Furthermore recent cuts in non-carbon generation have increased the likelihood of investment shortfall and thus lack of urgently needed new generation schemes.

Nuclear remains in the headlines as uncertainty mounts over the ability of EDF to fund the Hinkley Point reactor. Government owned, well not quite wholly owned as some 16% is in private hands, EDF postponed a Board meeting to approve the project. Financing is mainly in the hands of the French and Chinese but they rely on the UK Treasury guarantee of loans up to £17 billion. EDF have a long and inglorious history with new plants outside France with problems in Finland as well as

major project slippage at their Flamanville site which is years overdue and three times over budget.

The other main concern in UK these days is the so called Brexit Referendum. This was promised by the outgoing Coalition Government and included in the Conservative Manifesto and is intended to allow the British people to decide whether to remain in or out of the European Union. There are many arguments on each side of the debate that will affect the Project World and one of the most interesting concerns finance for infrastructure projects. Major Government investment requires EU approval so the Commission can impose conditions on their approval. In the case of the UK Treasury loan guarantee for Hinkley Point, a condition was that Flamanville had completed the trial operation period. The delays at Flamanville thus become significant for the start of the Hinkley Point reactor. Maybe we should just look at some simple carbon based power stations while the French sort out their nuclear industry. This might also allow some time to train a few nuclear engineers of our own.

As if the failure of the French to move on the nuclear design side was not enough to dent the Entente Cordiale, the contest to build the new trains required for High Speed 2 has been blown open by a “promise” to bring back rolling stock production to UK if Alstom win the £4 bn contract. HS2 Ltd, which oversees the development of the £50 bn project has insisted that a major proportion of the train procurement should be built in UK, thus giving a boost to Bombardier and Hitachi who both have UK plants. Rumour has it that Alstom are considering building a completely new plant in Acton, west London that would generate hundreds of much needed jobs. Press reports indicate a certain amount of weasel wording by the French company and that only fitting out would be done in UK so there would be no skilled engineering jobs.

PROJECT PEOPLE

There is always personnel movement in the Project World and one of the movers and shakers on the move is the boss of Babcock. **Peter Rogers**, the out-going CEO, brought Babcock into the FTSE 100 and is regarded as one of the last old school Boardroom types, always ready for the rough and tumble of senior management. He leaves after 13 years at the top. He will be replaced by his right hand man, **Archie Bethel**, who has been heading Babcock’s Marine Division and is closely associated with the QE2 aircraft carrier programme.



The Association for Project Management held its annual luncheon for its Honorary Fellow as this report closed. The occasion allowed the new President, **David Waboso** CBE (left) his first public opportunity to address PM issues in the modern era. David’s concern is to ensure the ability of the profession to meet the needs of international business, particularly in overcoming the weaknesses of the Iron Triangle.

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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