

UK Project Management Round Up



By Miles Shepherd
Executive Advisor & International Correspondent
Salisbury, England, UK

INTRODUCTION

Well, its all happening here in UK. We have a new Prime Minister, APM has a new President, England won the World Cup Cricket and we are at the start of the Ashes (for non-cricketing readers – this is the series of international 5 day matches between England and Australia). To cap it all, we have basked in scorching hot sunshine in some parts of the country but shivered and soaked under violent thunderstorms in other parts.

I don't think I can fairly categorise news in the Project World as good, bad or indifferent so I will leave you to sort out your own views on the impact of a new Prime Minister (not PM as the press have it, we reserve that abbreviation for Project Managers) on the Project world, what is going on in BREXIT, developments at the Association for Project Management (APM) and the International Project Management Association.

PRIME MINISTERIAL IMPACT

We now have **Boris Johnson** as Prime Minister. He is a divisive figure as followers of the national press will know all too well but he is also prime mover in the BREXIT movement and so we can expect considerable action on that front, as explained in the next section. However, Mr Johnson made interventions in June on the future of High Speed 2 (HS2), hinting his opposition to the latest cost challenges. However, He appears to have rowed back from a critical position by asking the Chairman of HS2 to review the business case. **Liz Truss**, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, had earlier threatened to kill off so called "white elephant" projects, including HS2, as Ministers have been told to use this Summer's Spending Review to decide which Whitehall departments will get more cash and which will be asked to tighten their belts. Truss moved to International Trade Secretary in the BoJo Cabinet Reshuffle so can still keep an eye on some major projects, but latest reports claim that the Prime Minister said he was not currently intending to scrap any major infrastructure projects despite estimates suggesting the HS2 high speed rail line will cost more than £100bn, Of course, this position is subject to expediency corrections – the latest You Gov poll has found a

distinct lack of support for HS2 in the Midlands – the one region expected to benefit most.

BREXIT

Now we have a strongly pro-BREXIT Prime Minister, we also have a new administration with similar views. Several Departments have issued new spending priorities. The Prime Minister is said by many to be turbo charging preparations to leave on 29 October and instructed cabinet ministers to mount a publicity blitz along the lines that UK is planning to leave with no EU deal. In essence, he is saying that neither UK nor the EU want a no-deal exit but without some shift in the EU position, especially on the Irish border issue, UK will be forced to leave with no deal. This pushes the “blame” back to M **Barnier**, the chief EU negotiator.

The situation is complicated by confusion over the rights of EU citizens to remain in UK post BREXIT. Successive regimes in UK have stated that EU citizens of “settled status” will be welcome to remain and the new Prime Minister said the rights of EU citizens would be “guaranteed in law” as early as possible. He also pledged a massive overhaul of the UK’s migration system following the end of free movement. Both will take primary legislation and that will take time.



Outbound delays at Dover – supply chain problems to come. Photo – Rohan Josh

It is quite clear that there will be considerable disruption to the supply of imported goods post Brexit. Some of these shortages will affect projects, probably construction as steel and concrete need to come from overseas. Other project will have problems recruiting specialist staff and will be unable to recruit overseas. Some of these problems offer opportunities for firms as they seek other suppliers and also significant opportunities for the project profession as demand will likely rise against a static supply

of trained staff and even fewer experienced practitioners will be available. An interesting situation, I think!

APM NEWS

The Association for Project Management (APM) has had a busy month. First, and most significant, **Sue Kershaw** has been appointed as the new President, succeeding **David Waboso**. We have already reported Sue's appointment and you can read David's reflections on his time on office elsewhere in the PMWJ. Sue is the UK Managing Director of Major Projects Advisory at KPMG and prior to that held a variety of senior project appointments including director of rail, Europe for CH2M HILL, director of programme management for Grosvenor Britain and Ireland and deputy director of transport for the Olympic Delivery Authority, responsible for all rail and road transport for the games and the programme management of the wider portfolio.

APM has also announced the finalists for the 2019 Project Management Awards. Record number of applications have been received this year. A full list is available at <https://www.apm.org.uk/apm-awards/finalists/> and comes from a highly diverse range of industry sectors. There are several new categories this year, including Contribution to the Profession: Innovation in Projects. Final judging continues through the summer and the awards take place at a gala dinner held at Old Billingsgate, London on Monday 18 November.



Sue Kershaw, APM President from November 2019



Speaking of award, APM has been shortlisted for three categories in the Association Excellence Awards 2019. These awards are the acknowledged accolade that recognises and rewards the hard-won achievements of trade bodies, professional membership organisations and associations. APM has been nominated the following categories:

- Overall Best Association (over 1,000 members)
- Best Association Awards Event – for the APM Project Management Awards 2018
- Best Association Partnership or Collaboration – for Make Change Happen, a national campaign to inspire and raise awareness of the project management profession.

The winners will be announced at the awards ceremony at the Kia Oval, London on Friday 11 October.

As we close for press, APM released their Members Review summarising achievements in the year up to March 2019. The full report can be downloaded at

https://www.apm.org.uk/media/36847/22526_apm_members_report_final.pdf. The major achievements include a 16% jump in membership with all grades reporting increases. Major growth areas are student membership which has increased by 79% and Fellow, up 16%. Interestingly, international membership increased by 17% - and APM do not actively market this option. This is the first year that individuals were admitted as Chartered Project Professionals (ChPP). Some 495 ChPPS were registered by 31 March and 768 applications. Overall, qualifications taken and standards attained up 12 per cent to 19,830.

Other major achievements included the publication of the 7th edition of the Body of Knowledge; the launch of APM Learning, a new digital platform and the successful launch of two major collaborative research reports; firstly a collaboration with the University of Manchester on project management and productivity. Second, a collaboration with PriceWaterhouseCoopers and an academic panel dealing with the value of project management to the UK's economy.

Finally, a new initiative called "Projecting the Future" was launched in Manchester under the chairmanship of Tim Banfield. The initial report outlines the challenges facing the profession and seeks collaboration from academics and practitioners to address possible changes to the profession from diverse challenges such as the impact of Artificial Intelligence, new skills needed, the impact of professionalism, revised ethics needs and the role of PM in society. All in all, a pretty diverse year and one that has brought a welcome shift towards a more intellectual perspective on the profession.



IPMA RESEARCH AWARDS

The list of awards seems never ending but this is the season for such interesting developments. The International Project Management Association (IPMA) has for many years held annual research awards. These recognise excellence in research at senior and junior levels. Winners and outstanding contributions are available at <https://awards.ipma.world/news/1599/>. The Young Researcher award went to **Juliano Denicol**, a lecturer in Project Management at the University College London's (UCL) Bartlett School of Construction and Project Management.

Juliano's work explores the formation and evolution of megaproject client organisations, which are new, dedicated and often temporary entities created to deliver a project on behalf of the sponsor. This is examined in the context of the course of global infrastructure forecasted for the next ten years. The research has been instrumental in improving our understanding of how megaproject client organisations are structured and make strategic decisions to engage with the supply chain.

The research is expected to have a significant impact on the sector. It creates a dialogue between theory and practice to address society's challenges and provides insights not only to understand the problem, but also to inform potential solutions to megaproject delivery. It provides practical guidance for megaproject promoters, policy makers and practitioners in their strategic decisions in the front-end of those projects, increasing the knowledge of innovative structures to design the client organisation (intra-organisational) and the supply chain architecture (inter-organisational).

A CONFLICT OVER PROJECT SUCCESS

Stakeholders at a British sea-side resort are learning about the differing views on what constitutes project success. The previous administration committed Bexhill-on-Sea to a £288 K refurbishment project to renovate a local landmark, the Colonnade. Work ended in 2018 and was seemingly completed to time and budget.



Bexhill Colonnade Restaurant. Photo – Bexhill Observer

So what is the problem? It seems Councilors are complaining that the restaurant made a loss of some £56 K during its first 10 weeks of operation. This was said to be caused by problems connecting gas supplies which delayed the opening. It is not clear if this was part of the refurbishment project. However, a white knight appeared and took over operations resulting in an annual income of £53 K, almost double previous income from the

property and raising the value of the building by £165K. One side claim this was entirely fortuitous and only due to an external operator being found while the other said the project was a success.

Press reports as usual give little information on project scope and timetable, reporting only on the political point scoring. Project people will be all too familiar with this approach and most would be happy to claim credit for a successful project – actually running the restaurant would not normally fall within the project scope. However, one point picked up by one political party is loss of Council reputation. It would be very interesting to know how the project team approached the issue of operational losses. Much would depend on just what was the root cause of the operational failure and whether anything could have been done to alleviate a potential problem that occurred after hand-over. Just where does the PM responsibility end?

CLOSING REMARKS

Finally, news comes of further Royal approval of project management. Buckingham Palace staff have announced that they are looking for a construction project manager within the Privy Purse and Treasurer's Office who will be tasked with managing "an extremely varied portfolio of major projects across the royal estate." The palace is looking for somebody who is an "expert at managing the end-to-end project lifecycle, including procurement, financial governance and contract management" and who is "organized, proactive and with lots of initiative." Exceptional communication skills are essential.



Buckingham Palace. Photo - Mirror

The Palace is a huge property, with some 775 rooms, including 19 state rooms, 240 bedrooms, nearly 100 offices and 87 bathrooms, according to the palace's website. Over the years, it has played host to a variety of musical performances, picnics, receptions and other events. Politicians, athletes, entertainers, academics and others are among the 50,000 people invited to palace events annually.

This is not the first time that there has been a Royal call for project support. Those with long memories will recall the BBC TV Horizon programme devoted to the project management of Ascot Race Course which featured Dr Martin Barnes as PM advisor. He introduced the notion of a business case for the project as well as his famous "Iron Triangle" concept to the general public. It is interesting that the job specification requires applicants to be Chartered – PM has come of age!

About the Author



Miles Shepherd

Salisbury, UK



Miles Shepherd is an executive editorial advisor and international correspondent for PM World Journal 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 and a Fellow of the International Project Management Association (IPMA). He is currently a Director for PMI's Global Accreditation Centre and is immediate past 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@misp-ltd.co.uk.