

UK Project Management Round Up



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

INTRODUCTION

The project world in UK continues to be dominated by political events. Despite the headlines, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland remains legally governed but judicial interventions threaten the nation's political stability. This is a major event in UK history and a point I will return to shortly. Elsewhere in the PM world, some major projects are under threat but there is some cause for optimism.

GOOD NEWS

As reported last month, the UK ship building industry have been awaiting the announcement of the preferred bidder for the next tranche of frigates for the Royal Navy. The Government has duly announced that Babcock Team 31 has been selected by the UK Ministry of Defence (MOD) as the preferred bidder to deliver its new warships. Led by Babcock, the Aerospace and Defence company, and in partnership with the Thales Group, the T31 general purpose frigate programme will provide the UK Government with a fleet of five ships, at an average production cost of £250 million per ship.



Image: Babcock International

Following a comprehensive competitive process, Arrowhead 140, a capable, adaptable and technology-enabled global frigate will be the UK Royal Navy's newest class of warships, with the first ship scheduled for launch in 2023. At its height the programme will require a workforce of around 1250 highly-skilled roles in multiple locations throughout the UK, with around 150 new technical apprenticeships likely to be developed. The work is expected to support an additional 1250 roles within the wider UK supply chain. With Babcock's Rosyth facility as the central integration site, the solution provides value for money and squarely supports the principles of the National Shipbuilding Strategy. It builds on the knowledge and expertise developed during the Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier modular build programme.

A key element of the Type31 programme is to supply a design with the potential to secure a range of export orders thereby supporting the UK economy and UK jobs. Recent successes in this domain include a major order from the Australian Navy to build a fleet of Type 26 frigates in yards in Australia in addition to the Canadian order for 15 vessels to be built under licence at yards in Nova Scotia demonstrates the effectiveness of the UK's National Ship Building Strategy. The deal gives UK a second naval shipbuilder, thus ending BAE Systems monopoly on the construction of surface combat vessels.

Stirling Prize



Image: Architecture.com

Credits: Clockwise from top left with photographer credits: Cork House © Magnus Dennis; Goldsmith Street © Tim Crocker; Nevill Holt Opera © Hélène Binet; The Weston, Yorkshire Sculpture Park © Mikael Olsson; The Macallan Distillery and Visitor Experience © Mark Power; London Bridge Station © Paul Rafter

This is not new as the announcement came in the high summer but it was crowded out by bad news! The Royal Institution of British Architects (RIBA) has a major annual award that draws on regional competition to short list half a dozen top designs for consideration. This year, the award winner will be announced on 8 October and the short listed designs are:

London Bridge Station, the oldest in London, opening in 1836, and the fourth busiest in the city. The design required reimagining a station with over 180 years of changing requirement. Furthermore, the station had to be kept open for the 50 million passengers a year who use it while the five-year transformation took place. Not only is the outcome a lovely design it is also a major project management achievement.

The Weston, is part of the Yorkshire Sculpture Park and sits in an 18th century country park estate, Bretton Hall. The Sculpture Park has developed a series of indoor exhibition spaces of which the latest is the Weston. It provides a visitor centre and gallery. According to RIBA the key driver for the design is to establish a close relationship between the buildings and the landscape so as to complement the exhibits. At The Weston, the architect has fully embraced this aspiration. The building is truly of its landscape.

Goldsmith Street, Norwich is a development of seven terrace blocks arranged in four lines. It presents a coherent visual field that communicated the best of enlightened modern domestic European architecture from the outset. The more one absorbs this project, the more this feeling is reinforced. Although the layout has a traceable link with the English housing tradition, the rest of the project is very modern in its conception. The architects won this scheme of just over a hundred dwellings a dozen years ago, and have worked and re-worked it, each time keeping their aim of creating a highly sustainable community in mind.

Nevill Holt Opera, Leicestershire. The history of the site provided the architects with a starting point that allowed them to firstly focus on the idea of a room in stone which then has a cut in the ground that forms the stalls and orchestra pit. A series of further moves insert the seating, roof and rooflight. This creates a clear hierarchy to what is a quiet architecture, a crafted box that allows the performer to be centre stage and the proportions and inner wall of the stable block to be respected.

Cork House is a structure of great ingenuity. Sited within the area of a Grade II Listed mill house dating back to the early 19th century, the Cork House beautifully reflects and respects the natural surroundings in form and construction. The 'whole-life approach' to sustainability truly sets this project apart. Designed, tested and developed in partnership with The Bartlett School of Architecture UCL, they have delivered a project that is the first of its kind.

The Macallan Distillery and Visitor Experience is one of my favourites. I reported on its success in the Scottish part of the Stirling Prize back in June but the images are compelling and like the Weston, it seems to rise out of the ground in a natural process of growth.

I don't envy the judges for the Stirling Final – all these buildings are spectacular, represent design excellence and some impressive project management.

THE PROFESSION

Carrying on the theme of awards, I see the PMI UK Chapter is holding its annual awards the week before the more well-known APM Awards. Looking at the categories on the PMI UK website, they seem to follow the same general pattern but have two categories hitherto not included by APM: PM literature and Teaching Excellence.



The inaugural PMI UK National Project Awards, sponsored by PwC, aims to recognise the projects, individuals and teams that have excelled within the project management profession. Award winners across each of the 11 categories will be announced at a black-tie gala dinner and awards ceremony on 14th November 2019 hosted at the Honourable Artillery Company. Sounds curiously like the rather longer established and very lavish APM Awards. They say that imitation is the best form of flattery.



Meanwhile, back with the APM Awards comes exciting news for those attending the gala, on 18 November at Old Billingsgate, London – stand-up comedian and comedy writer Jo Caulfield has been announced as the event host. This breaks a long-standing tradition of hosting by BBC News room personalities. This gala is well known for its glamour and elegance so it comes as no surprise that it is one of APM's premier events

and highlight of the UK PM world.

NOT SO GOOD NEWS

Considering that the UK Rail industry is the oldest in the world, with roots going back to the early 19th century, you could be forgiven in thinking that the industry knew how to run tendering exercises. The recent award to manage the West Coast Mainline and HS2 railways to First Trenitalia has faced stiff faced criticism within the industry. The group bid beat tenders for the west coast main line by the current contractor, Virgin Trains, a joint venture between Sir Richard Branson and the quoted group Stagecoach; and by MTR, the Hong Kong mass transit operator, partnered by the Guangshen Railway Company, of China.

MTR has been a favourite contractor of Transport for London, and despite operating a very different type of operation has said: "We will seek clarification from the

Department for Transport about why we were unsuccessful.” National press views this as a coded warning that MTR wants to know how the First Trenitalia bid could be sustainable and of a higher quality and that it could mount a legal challenge. This all smacks of déjà vu – remember Stagecoach (East Midlands franchise) and Virgin (again! – West Coast franchise)?

High Speed 2 is still battling the independent review and little has been heard since last month apart from a cry from one paper that continuation of the programme will result in higher electricity bills. This is based on whizzo schemes to fund new power lines to meet the extra demand created by the new line. A whistleblower has come forward to claim corruption in the award of contracts to suppliers. This brings in the Serious Fraud Office who are also considering whether any action should be taken over allegations of property owners being forced to sell at unrealistically low prices. This seems unlikely as there are also allegations of inflated prices being paid for similar properties. Lucky we have an expert Inquiry Chair to handle this mess.

New Nuclear is also in the firing line this month – but that is hardly news, I hear you complain. Actually it isn't news at all just the slow roll of officialdom. The failed weld problems at Flammanville (Normandy) and Olkiluoto (Finland) have come the attention of the French Economy Minister. As EDF, the builders of the new reactor at Hinkley Point, is state owned, you could be forgiven for thinking that the Minister should take an interest. Anyway, the Minister complained that the French nuclear sector as like “a state within a state” as he denounced cost overruns and construction delay. Clearly the guillotine is being rolled out for M Jean-Bernard Lévy who started his second 4 year term as CEO just last February. I doubt that I shall live long enough to see any electricity generated from Hinkley Point!

SUSTAINABILITY

Most people are focused on the youth rant on sustainability, but the topic has been around in UK project management circles for the best part of 20 years, led by **Professor Peter Morris**. A few years ago, Peter published a key text via APM and presented it at the IPMA Research Conference at Reykjavik. The cause was taken up by practitioners in USA, Canada and Australia who formed GPM, not to be confused with GPM-IPMA. Sustainability is clearly a critical factor in all our lives but this is something that Project Managers are particularly well placed to address so I make no apology for reporting the completion of a Lighthouse project funded by the European Union.

Triangulum is one of 14 European Smart Cities and Communities Lighthouse Projects (SCC1) funded by the European Union's Research and Innovation Framework Programme Horizon 2020. Since inception in February 2015, Triangulum has followed the journeys of three 'Lighthouse' cities: Manchester (UK), Eindhoven (NL) and Stavanger (NO) as each city implemented and tested innovative smart solutions in bids to create more sustainable urban environments. This note concerns only the UK element but a full report is available at <https://www.triangulum-project.eu/>

In the UK, Manchester looked at the key issues of ICT, mobility and energy. Manchester City Council - the lead organisation of Triangulum in Manchester, The

University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University – partnered with Siemens as the technical partner to investigate how to balance energy consumption and demand, reduce costs and carbon emissions and increase the use of renewable energy along the city's Oxford Road Corridor.

In 2019 Siemens upgraded the Building Energy Management System (BEMS) at Manchester Art Gallery to create a more stable indoor climate within the 200-year old listed building. The gallery houses priceless artefacts and artworks where the control of temperature and humidity were vital to the care and conservation of thousands of valuable pieces and the Grade III listed building itself. The replacement BEMS utilised a demand-side response operation that activated heating, cooling and humidity on a needs-basis while predictive analytics were used to return energy sources back onstream when required.

Siemens has been working with Manchester Met University on its distributed energy system at its Birley Campus. A 400kWh lithium-ion battery integrates with new solar panels installed on the roof as part of the project. Together with the solar panels and the existing Combined Heat Power (CHP), it can supply power to 900 student rooms and a large academic building. All these technologies are controlled by a Siemens microgrid controller which chooses the best energy source to use and whether the battery should store or release energy.

A cloud-based energy management platform functioned as a virtual power plant and managed the renewable loads in tandem with the BMS located at three sites around the city. The controller integrated with the BMS systems and switched non-critical assets like heating and cooling on and off in response to demands to maximise energy efficiency; compensating for different weather conditions or changing populations in any of the buildings. The solution optimised energy consumption, reduced CO2 and lessened the area's dependence on the grid. Scaled citywide the central controller could potentially save Manchester approximately 57,000tons of CO2 emissions per annum – that's the same as taking 12,000 cars off the road each year!

Leaving the EU will mean no more research projects such as this.

BREXIT

It will be a sad day when the BREXIT issue is finally resolved – what will newspapers, TV News reporters and the like find to talk about? We have just been through a very traumatic and historic time from which no one has emerged with much credit. Readers will know that the UK Parliament has been unable to agree a plan for our departure from the European Union. Furthermore, they know they don't like ANY of the plans offered in the last 3 years but have been unable to come up with anything better.

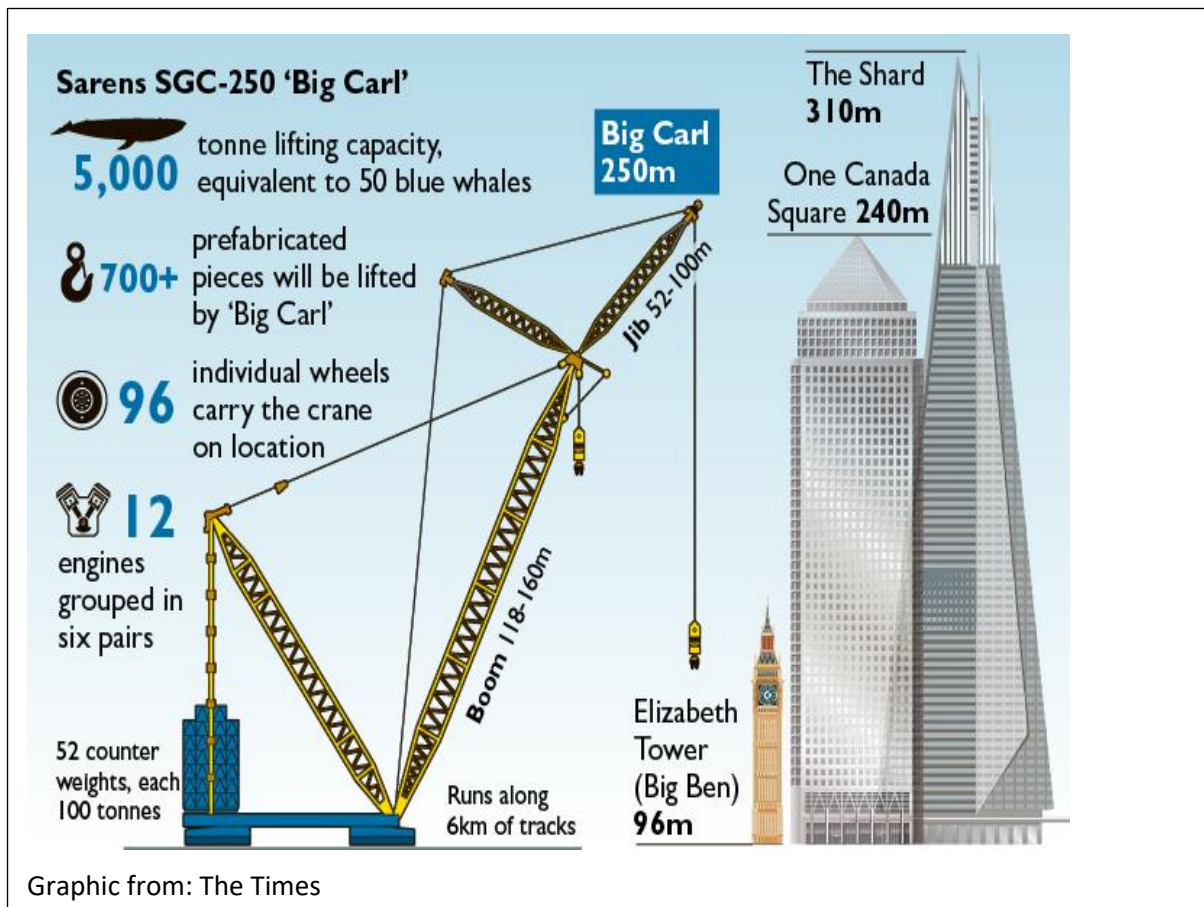
Our esteemed Prime Minister (PM) therefore decided to dispense with the assistance of Honorable Members by proroguing Parliament. For those who missed last month's explanation, this means acting in favour of rogues, no, no, it results in shutting down the Houses of parliament. This was greeted with howls of objection, mainly from the press as most Parliamentarians were off guzzling and shouting at their annual Party

Conferences and so Parliament was suspended for the first couple of weeks of this closure.

The matter was referred to the Supreme Court, a new fangled institution dreamed up by the sainted Blair. These worthy judges decided the Prime Minister acted illegally and so Parliament was recalled. It should be noted that the PM did actually ask the senior law man in Parliament, the Master of the Rolls, whether his action was legal and was assured it was. Now we have a real mess on our hands as we have managed to politicize our Supreme Court who now control the actions of Ministers. Hitherto, this was the responsibility of Parliament. We are left with a situation where the politics of our most senior judges will have an important bearing on their appointment; we have just witnessed the destruction of a thousand years history, effective checks and balances and a rejection of responsibility. Many observers feel we are seeing the result of adult pester power, where all you need to do is continue to should until you wear down sensible controls.

CLOSING REMARKS

On a more positive note, I see that the world's largest crane has been deployed at Hinkley Point. This beast is taller than Canary Wharf! Reminds me of my childhood Meccano set (for US readers Erector Set).



For older PMs comes welcome news that taking afternoon naps is linked to healthy hearts. This is not a licence to kip after lunch daily as the most effective benefits come from just one or two naps a week. This is, however, a challenge to the work life balance of PMs since some bosses will insist that employees take their naps in their own time. If I tried this at home, I would get short shrift as my wife always has a list of jobs I should be doing instead of snoring for an hour or so after Sunday lunch.

Perhaps this healthier heart is something that needs to be looked at in France where the death of a worker has been reported and the employing firm has been told to pay the family generous long term benefits including a monthly benefit of 80% of the salary until the worker reached retirement age and then a major proportion of the pension payments. Oh, and the nature of the accident that “caused” the death? The death was attributed to having sex with a woman the man met on a business trip. Got to be some lessons here for UK Health and Safety.

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@m-sp-ltd.co.uk.