

UK Project Management Round Up



*By Miles Shepherd
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INTRODUCTION

One of the issues we all face during lockdown is the influence of ennui – not boredom as such but a lethargy, an inability to start work that needs to be done and difficulty completing tasks. Fortunately, events in the project world have been diverse, exciting and worthy of attention. So as lockdown continues, I will try to share with you some of the matters that have come to my attention in July.

The UK economy has figured large in the national press throughout July and the news has been mixed so a look at what passes for policy at the government level will be of interest as it will impact many different sectors, all of which depend upon project managers. This means that professional project people will be visible so the news of developments at the Association for Project management are also important. So, this month we will be looking at the good news, government policy issues, green projects overseas and some good news on the wildlife projects scene.

APM

The news from APM is tinged with sadness as one of the stalwarts of the Association has died. Geoff Reiss, best known as the man who developed Pertmaster, passed on aged 75. A man of many parts, he had many claims to fame as may be seen at the tribute posted at <https://www.apm.org.uk/news/in-memoriam-project-management-pioneer-geoff-reiss/>. I knew him for his work on programme management, one of the first people in UK to take up this vital aspect of our profession, and as an Honorary Fellow. He will be much missed.

APM have also appointed two new Honorary Fellows, Amanda Meller and Professor Andrew Davies. As Chief Guide, **Amanda Meller** is Girlguiding's most senior volunteer. She has been involved in guiding her whole life and has been a Girlguiding qualified trainer since 2003. Over the years she has progressed from being chair of the British Youth Council delegation to being elected as a member of Council and the Executive committee.



Amanda Meddler

In addition, Amanda is a senior consultant at Adapta Consulting, an organisation that specialises in working with charities, membership organisations and other not-for-profit organisations. Prior to her current role, she was a senior project manager for Citizens Advice where she managed a £10m project to provide extended hours of advice across over 500 locations in England and Wales reaching an additional 335,000 clients every year. She also has experience in the financial sector, managing ICT and business change programmes.

Professor Andrew Davies is the RM Phillips Freeman Chair and professor of innovation management in the Science Policy Research Unit (SPRU), University of Sussex Business School. He is a researcher, educator, consultant and advisor who is fascinated by understanding and making innovation happen in complex projects, with a focus on large-scale infrastructure in the built environment.

He began his career at SPRU, Sussex University before moving to Amsterdam University, Imperial College and University College London (UCL). He returned to SPRU in 2019 and continues as honorary professor at the Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment at UCL and visiting professor in the Department of Business and Management at Luiss University in Rome.

Over the past 15 years, he has collaborated with leaders of some of the UK's largest infrastructure projects including Heathrow (terminal 5, terminal 2 and the third runway), the London Olympics, Crossrail, the Thames Tideway Tunnel, High-Speed 1 and 2, and the Westminster Palace Restoration and Renewal Project.

He is a regular collaborator with APM, having authored our 2019 report *Project Management for Large, Complex Projects*. He also contributed to *Future of Project Management*, a collaboration between APM, Arup and The Bartlett School of Construction and Project Management at UCL

GOOD NEWS

The real good news is that lockdown in UK has been eased. Of perhaps more import is the more nuanced stance adopted by the governments of all the nations in the Union. This means that where conditions allow, less restrictive conditions apply. Conversely, where so-called “spikes” appear, more stringent conditions can be imposed. While this is more an operational than project matter, it is still good news as more project people will be able to function more effectively as restrictions ease. So now we need to keep taking the medicine – and wear our masks!



Inage: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

The fight against Covid-19 continues around the world and we must hope the various projects succeed. There are some 26 projects around the world in clinical evaluation.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) lists 6 at Phase 3 (usually involves up to 3,000 participants who have the condition – often takes several years and is the penultimate stage before release), a single project at Phase 2 (involves several hundred participants who have Coronavirus). WHO data lists 9 trials at Phase 1/2 and a further 10 at Phase 1 (investigates the effects of the vaccine on a small group of people who have no underlying health conditions). Staggeringly, there are 139 vaccines for SARS-CoV2 but these are all in pre-clinical trials² and not specifically aimed at the Covid 19. The good news is that it is possible that the University of Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine based on a Non-Replicating Viral Vector platform might even be ready this year although reports from the Oxford based project team play down the likelihood of this as much depends on much larger trials in the United States, Brazil, Britain and South Africa. According to Adrian Hill, Jenner Institute at Oxford Director, these trials should show whether the jab prevented infections and disease. “It’s possible that there’ll be a vaccine being used by the end of the year,” he said.

The bad news is that it is possible that none of the candidate vaccines will offer full protection, according to Kate Bingham, head of the UK Vaccine Task Force. This is why work continues with re-purposed drugs to reduce the impact of coronavirus illnesses. Some progress has been made as there are now several drugs in use that reduce recovery time and ease the problems associated with respirators. This is also why the UK Government has invested in 3 potential anti-virus drugs. Another interesting feature of the WHO report is the huge number of studies published. It notes some 36,500 published in English of which the vast majority are from UK, published via the British Medical Journal (BMJ) and The Lancet. Less than 1000 come from France or Germany, perhaps an indication of the strength of British science.

DEFENDER CONTINUES AS A GRENADIER



Image: Wikipedia

Automotive news continues to be awful unless you happen to have £3.3 million – this will bring you a replica of James Bond’s Aston Martin complete with retractable machine guns and ejector seat button. Sadly, this version does not have operational weaponry, just in case its driver caught a case of road rage, but is substantially cheaper than the version sold in California last year for \$6.39 million (£5.26 million) – and that wasn’t even the car driven by Sir Sean Connery

in the film *Goldfinger* back in 1964. It did have retractable machineguns, and a revolving licence plate in addition to its tyre slashers which may have contributed to its record as the most expensive James Bond car sold at auction.

The real defender, though, is the Land Rover version pictured right in its military form. This is a vehicle I know well, having travelled many thousands of miles in various editions. This work horse of the British Armed Forces deployed in 1958 and was retired in 2012 as a result of changing warfare methods in Afghanistan. Its replacement offered greater protection from improvised explosive devices and small arms fire but was not popular with soldiers on the ground. Now we learn that the Defender is to be re-introduced, not by Land Rover but by **Ineos**, the well-known sponsor of the Tour de France cycling team. Sir Jim Ratcliffe, who owns Ineos, hopes the Grenadier (see below) will fill a gap in the UK market.



Image: Joint-Forces.com Land Rover Defender in UK Army colours



Sir Jim Radcliffe and the 2021 Grenadier Image Times Newspapers

Radcliffe has invested some £600 million to create the vehicle which was to be built at a new purpose-built plant in Wales although that plan seems to be on hold as new partners have emerged. There is a possibility that the vehicle will be at a Mercedes-Benz-owned site in Moselle, France. BMW engines are planned to be used to overcome emissions problems that accounted for the demise of the Defender 110. Given the problems of the German car industry in relation to

emissions, this seems a surprising choice but Sir Jim didn't become UK's 5th richest individual by making wrong business decisions.

POLITICS MATTERS

Amid all the Corona Virus problems, it is easy to forget that we still have a country to run so little items such as the Prime Minister's ending of UK support for "dirty" global oil and gas projects. According to *The Times*, a review of export finance guarantees intended to help fund £ billions of fossil fuel projects around the world. This will, apparently preserve our reputation on climate change. Interestingly, this slipped out just days after a controversial announcement that we would offer £900 million in loans and export guarantees for a gas pipeline project in Mozambique. I don't suppose the jihadists threat to disrupt the pipeline had anything to do with the decision as reports seem to indicate that Mr Johnson felt he had been bounced into a decision on the Mozambique project. Still, it allows a retraction and the raising of the black flag of Islamic State for the first time in southern Africa is certainly unsettling. According to analysts, the jihadists have successfully exploited a local uprising to establish the terror group's first regional franchise.

Other Government policy disclosures that affect the Project world include further investment in Skynet, the satellite programme started in 1969 and updated in 2007 as Skynet 5. The new £500 million investment further upgrades the military

communications network to 6A level. It will be built by Airbus Space and Defence and tested at the National Satellite Test Facility in Harwell, Oxfordshire, run by RAL Space, a government-funded research body. Ben Wallace, Defence Secretary, claimed the uprated system which will use higher radio frequencies and digital processing, will “provide more capacity, speed and greater versatility” than its predecessor. Looks like some interest is being shown for Britain to rejoin the space race.

BREXIT

No, it hasn't gone away – just taking a lower profile. I'm not sure whether this is part of the Good News department but there are reports that a comprehensive trade deal could be completed in September according to the statement at the end of the July negotiations. British and EU negotiators were, however, warning that two big hurdles – fishing rights and competition where the EU is seeking major concessions. As a result, the chief UK negotiator is warning that “considerable gaps remain in the most difficult areas”. As a result, UK must “face the possibility” that the talks could collapse. Some see this is progress other as a dire threat. I think I take the view that everything will be OK in the end and if it isn't OK, it isn't the end!

On the other hand, there are strong indications that a trade deal with Japan is immanent and Ministers are said to be close to signing an agreement. This would be the UK's first significant post-Brexit trade deal after fast track talks put an agreement within striking distance. According to reports in the press, the deal is very similar to the EU economic partnership agreement that was implemented last year although it is likely to be less ambitious than originally intended. It is understood that no progress has been made on reducing agricultural tariffs and red tape on British food exports, mainly due to lack of time. It is expected that the deal needs to be signed by the end of August so that it can be implemented as Britain leaves the EU in December.

There are some other BREXIT projects in the pipeline but these will have to wait till next month but include the Free Port project, and no-deal exit planning.

CLOSING REMARKS



Stonehenge. Image: AKG Images

You will be delighted to learn that one of the world's great mysteries has been solved after nearly 4,500 years! The secret of Stonehenge's largest stones has been revealed. The provenance of the largest stones in the World Heritage Site's circle has been traced thanks to the return of core sample from USA. During the 1958 restoration three sarsens, the biggest stones forming the upright seen in the picture left, were restored to their original positions but needed to be made stable. This involved drilling a hole so that it could be pinned into place with a metal bracket. Robert Phillips performed the job and was allowed to keep the core which went with him to Florida when he moved there. His family returned the sample after he died. Analysis of the sample showed that it had been quarried some 4.500 years ago from an area called West Wood, some 15 miles north of Stonehenge on the Marlborough Downs (see map). Quite how the stones were moved to the construction site is far from clear and the route has not been identified

although there are a couple of obvious options. The sarsen stones are about 9 metres tall and weigh about 25 tonnes. The sarsen stones formed the uprights and lintels of the outer circle and as well as the 15 stones of the central horseshoe. There are 52 sarsens on the site today. In all it is thought that there were 80 sarsens. The smaller stones, the so-called bluestones, have been traced to a quarry in South Wales, near Preseli. Moving those must have been a major task and how it was managed is a topic for speculation but must have been the first infrastructure project in the land.

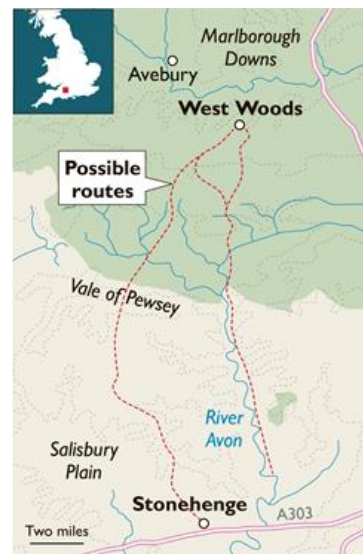
Wildlife Projects continue to make the news and this month we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the re-introduction of Red Kites to England. The species nearly became extinct and there were only a few pairs in remote areas of Wales. A re-introduction project was launched in 1980 that brought 13 young red kites from Spain and were released at a site near Hugh Wycombe on the Chiltern area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There are estimated to be more than 1800 breeding pairs in England and the population has spread throughout the southern half of the country, event to Salisbury.



Image: Richard McManus/Getty Images

Another successful re-introduction project features pine martens. This project involved the release of 18 animals from Scotland to a secret location in the Forest of Dean, north of Bristol. Remote cameras have shown that some have had kits, encouraging those who hope to see the animals increase and spread. They are seen as a natural control on grey squirrels.

And so another month passes in the project world. There is still quite a lot going on despite the headlines being grabbed by the Coronavirus news. Next month will feature developments in the nuclear industry, both construction and destruction so something for everyone, I hope!



Image@: Times Newspapers

About the Author



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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. His consulting work has taken him to Japan, Taiwan and USA. 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 is currently Chairman of the British Standards Institute project management committee. 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.