

## UK Project Management Round Up



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### INTRODUCTION

I had hoped there would be a change in the dynamic at Chateau Shepherd this month as the Press were blathering on about Freedom Day. A day to do anything you like sounded good but the media actually meant freedom from COVID restrictions. Clearly, they were not looking at the numbers – we Project Managers do look at the data and understand what we see. I'm sure you agree with this assessment of our core skill set. Anyhow, time for a change so this month, I'm looking at what the professional societies are up to, the start of a project for a national flagship, news about some UK projects and a few other tidbits.

### Professional Society News

The Association for Project Management (APM) has announced that *Professor Adam Boddison*, has been appointed by APM's Board of trustees and will officially join APM in September, taking over from departing chief executive *Debbie Dore* who stepped down at the end of June.

*Prof Boddison* is currently chief executive at charitable membership organisation **nasen** (the National Association for Special Educational Needs), a position he has held since 2015. He has also served as director of the Centre for Professional Education, **University of Warwick**, and holds non-executive director roles with various educational organisations.

In his role as chief executive at APM, he will lead the organisation in delivering its strategy and vision.

*Debbie Dore* joined APM in 2015 and held the roles of chief commercial officer and chief operating officer before becoming CEO in 2018. She led the organisation through periods of significant change, including establishing



**Prof Adam Boddison**

APM as a chartered body and navigating the challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic. Her career journey has seen her work for Thames Television, Oxford University Press and as a member of the board at Swets Information Services, delivering global transformation projects across sales, IT and customer service. Debbie has also served as a non-executive director for UKSG, a membership organisation connecting the knowledge community, and as a volunteer for Inspiring Future Careers.

Another recent arrival at APM is Andrew Baldwin who has stepped into the role of Head of Public Affairs in May. Andrew joins the CEO's Office at APM and is busy building a list of specialists to help get APM's messages to a wide audience. This is seen as particularly important as the country emerges from the ravages of the COVID 19 pandemic – and we're not yet out of the woods yet!

This is election time, not nationally but at APM – Specific Interest Group Committee and Branch Management committee elections opened and closed this month with some results announced as we were closing for press. Members can see results at the APM website ([www.APM.org.uk](http://www.APM.org.uk)).

### **National Flagship**

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Our Illustrious Leader (OIL to avoid confusing him with a real PM) told an overjoyed nation that a new national flagship is to be commissioned in a bid to boost British trade and industry globally. The vessel will be the successor to the Royal Yacht Britannia, which was retired in 1997. The ship is to be built in UK, at a reported cost of £200m. Given the successes of previous Government estimates (think Test and trace @ £32 bn) this can be considered a first stab and one that will be wildly under the real cost.



Mock-up of national flagship (image Downing Street)

Those who recollect the last Royal Yacht will know that HM The Queen used it very effectively in her exercise of soft power but those times are now far behind us. Few potential trading partners are likely to be impressed by a floating gin palace, especially one not used by our Monarch.

The project has drawn immediate criticism for Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition who want the Government to "demonstrate clearly how the ship is expected to boost trade, jobs and growth". Sounds like they want a business case, a not unreasonable request. The Ministry of Defence are also said to be less than enthusiastic and they are the ones who have been lined up to pay for what they fear may be either a white elephant or an albatross about their necks.

According to reports at the BBC, tendering for the design and construction will begin “soon” – costs for the "construction and operation" of the ship would be confirmed after the tendering process concluded. Construction is apparently expected to get under way next year, with the ship expected to enter service within the next four years. Let us hope that the Government has learned about the realities of tendering and contract award and their techniques have improved.

The one good point is that there is planned to be an emphasis on utilising British design expertise and the latest green technology. Those with long memories will recall that the late Duke of Edinburgh, a naval officer with substantial sea experience, played a significant role in the design and build of HMY Britannia. It is far from clear who would be able to act in a similar role today. It will be interesting to see who steps up to be the Project Sponsor!

### **Project Progress**

The **Archway Project** at Bath, Somerset, has been handed over to Bath & North East Somerset Council. The project began in 2019 and was ready for handover in June 2021. The project had two main objectives: first, to increase knowledge and enjoyment of the Bath World Heritage Site by providing a World Heritage Centre for Bath. Second, it will radically improve learning and community engagement at the Roman Baths where a new Learning Centre provides special activities for schools and local communities.

The new facilities are located in a group of dilapidated former industrial buildings in Swallow Street and York Street and in the undercroft beneath York Street already owned by Bath & North East Somerset Council. They also own and operate the Roman Baths to which the buildings that make up the new learning centre and World Heritage Centre are connected.

The £5 million Project provides much needed learning facilities at one of the UK's most visited heritage attractions with over a million visitors a year. Part of the scheme transforms a previously inaccessible undercroft into a hands-on investigation zone for school groups, set amongst the Roman ruins.



Roman Baths, Bath. Image Bath & Counties Archaeological Society

### **NHS Central database delay**

In the realm of joined up thinking, it has long been an ambition to centralise health records so that a single, secure and accurate set of health information for all UK inhabitants could be used to reduce recording errors and provide timely information

on individual health. There have been many attempts at providing this service, recollect the Whole Hospital Information catastrophe in the early 1990s, but most have proved too technically challenging. Well, progress has been made and the creation of a central NHS digital database from GP records in England is a major step in the right direction – except that its launch has been delayed by two months. The system, due to begin on 1 July, is now set for 1 September.

Various agencies have been calling for delays to allow patients more time to learn about the system. The British Medical Association and the Royal College of GPs had also expressed concern as has the British Computer Society (BCS).

The general view is that the government has taken a sensible decision to delay the launch. Health Minister, *Jo Churchill*, speaking in the House of Commons said the GP data programme would "save lives". She also said the government was "absolutely determined to take people with us on this journey" and had therefore decided to push the implementation date back to the beginning of September. Curiously, she claimed that Ministers would use the extra time to "talk to doctors, patients and charities to strengthen the plan... and ensure data is accessed securely". It is not quite clear just what sort of contribution a bunch of assorted policy wonks might make but the key point is that "Patients own their own data".

Needless to say, Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition welcomed the delay but argued that the "current plans to take data from GPs, assemble it in one place and sell it to unknown commercial interests for purposes unknown has no legitimacy." So far as is currently planned, no such illegitimate plot exists. Similarly, shadow health minister Alex Norris thought the plans had been "snuck out under the cover of darkness" so it is curious that public bodies, outside the Westminster bubble, had noticed the plan.

More to the point, *Dr Bill Mitchell OBE*, Director of Policy at BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT said: "Ethical use of health data benefits the whole of society - but it is difficult to know precisely who will be doing what with these records and the process should be far easier to understand and more visible to the general public. "Most of the millions of people affected will be unaware that this is happening, even if there will be benefits for all of us from the research that NHS Digital is facilitating. "There must be a robust mechanism for us to check what's actually going on with our data and to be told very clearly whenever there are significant changes to how our data is shared, if that might give us pause for thought."

### **Mayflower AI Project**

Millions of school children in both USA and UK know all about the Mayflower and its historic voyage in 1620. What they may not know about is an ambitious programme of exploration by a modern day Mayflower. And one of the significant differences between 1620 and 2020 is human involvement. The original Mayflower had 102 Pilgrims and a crew of 30. The modern Mayflower has neither passengers nor crew! Other significant differences include its purpose, propulsion and navigation. The Mayflower Autonomous Ship (MAS) uses AI to navigate and the energy from the sun for propulsion. The purpose of MAS is to reveal more about the ocean.

Working in tandem with scientists and other autonomous vessels, MAS provides a flexible and cost-effective platform for deepening understanding of critical issues such as climate change, ocean plastic pollution and marine mammal conservation. In

parallel, the development of marine autonomous systems promises to transform ocean-related industries such as shipping, oil & gas, telecommunications, security & defence, fishing & aquaculture.



MAS debut 2019 (Photo Matthew Horwood / Getty Images)



MAS at sea during trials off south coast  
Photo Credit: IBM/Promare

The Mayflower Autonomous Ship project is led by marine research organisation ProMare with IBM acting as both lead technology partner and lead scientific partner for the project. MAS employs a range of sensor technology that guides its decision-making process including:

- Light detecting and ranging (LIDAR)
- Radio detecting and ranging (RADAR)
- Global Positioning System (GPS)
- Satellites
- Cameras

For more information on Mayflower anniversary and programme objectives, see <https://www.mayflower400uk.org/>. For MAS news and technical information see <https://www.promare.org/>

### **Branson Space Flight project**

And now for a different form of travel – and one that is proving highly competitive as three Billionaires compete to develop the space tourism industry. The latest news is that Sir Richard Branson received a licence to send customers to the edge of space as his Virgin Galactic has beaten Jeff Bezos's Blue Origin and Elon Musk's SpaceX to get approval from the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

Virgin Galactic is nearing its goal of sending the 600 people who have already paid a deposit for a two-hour trip on its spacecraft. They are paying \$250,000 (£180,000) to be sent up to a height of 90km (56 miles) to see the curvature of the Earth and experience weightlessness. Blue Origin and SpaceX claim that Virgin Galactic does not reach the boundary of space as it does not reach the so-called Karman Line at 62 miles up. Virgin Galactic counter claiming that the FAA and other government agencies define space as beginning at 50 miles.



Space Ship 2 beneath its carrier (Photo: Virgin Galactic)

Virgin Galactic's Space Ship 2 rocket will be piggy-backed to a height of 12,000m before its rocket ignites. Launch will be from a spaceport in the New Mexico desert with two pilots although later flights may be from the planned UK spaceport at either Lands End or in the Scottish Highlands.

According to press reports, Branson, 70, is rumoured to be planning to take a test flight to the edge of space within the next month in an attempt to beat Bezos, 57, who is planning his first space flight on July 20 with

his brother and another passenger who has paid \$28 million for the ride.

### **Bezos cash injection in fusion project**



General Fusion plans a nuclear fusion plant at Culham. (Photo courtesy of General Fusion)

Sticking with stories concerning the very rich, we learn that Amazon boss Jeff Bezos has invested in a Canadian green energy company that plans to set up a plant in Oxfordshire to demonstrate a new kind of nuclear technology. General Fusion has announced it will move to the Culham Science Centre, which is the centre of nuclear fusion research in the UK. The Canadian firm hopes to host its patented technology at the new Fusion Demonstration Plant, known as the FDP. The company has been backed by Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos for more than a decade and raised more than £100m in a recent round of investment.

## Power station shutdown due to jelly fish

And now for something a little more traditional – still energy related. A local power station was forced to shut down temporarily after its systems were blocked by a "bloom of jellyfish". I, for one, did not know that jellyfish bloomed but the local risk analysts should probably have factored this phenomenon into their calculations, another point to be added to the checklist.



Marchwood Power Station (Image Chris Allen via BBC)



Possible outage culprit

Marchwood Power Station, near Southampton, had to cease operations in the middle of June. at 04:05 BST on Monday. General manager *Alan Ainsworth* described it as an event "outside of our control" which had "never occurred in the site's history".

Marchwood councillor Richard Young said nearby residents reported hearing a "loud whistling" noise from the site, attributed by Mr Ainsworth to the said station venting steam to relieve pressure in the system. He added: "The event was caused by the site's cooling water systems becoming blocked. This was due to a bloom of jellyfish entering the cooling water intakes."

Apparently this is not a new phenomenon nor one confined to UK despite claims that it was "being a one-off event, although monitoring will continue". Jellyfish are increasingly causing issues for power plants around the world by clogging up pipes with incidents at an Israeli power plant. In 2013, a swarm of jellyfish disrupted operations at one of the world's largest nuclear reactors in Sweden.

## Axelos bought by PeopleCert

My contacts in Greece brought me news that PeopleCert has agreed to acquire AXELOS, the joint venture company created in 2013 to manage, develop and grow the portfolio of global best practice methodologies in project, programme and portfolio management, and IT and digitally enabled services.

The deal values AXELOS at £380m (c. €450m / \$525m) on a cash-free, debt-free basis. This acquisition represents a major milestone for PeopleCert and is fully aligned with its strategy to accelerate growth and further establish its leadership position in the professional skills and languages certification markets.

AXELOS is a joint venture company created by the Cabinet Office on behalf of Her Majesty's Government (HMG) and Capita plc (CPI.L), to manage, develop and grow the portfolio of global best practice methodologies in project, programme and portfolio management, and IT and digitally enabled services, including PRINCE2® and ITIL®. The

methodologies are widely adopted by private, public and voluntary sectors in more than 200 countries to improve professionals' skills, aiming to make both individuals and organisations work more effectively.

PeopleCert claims wide relations with HMG and has been a trusted partner of AXELOS since its formation in 2014. PeopleCert has been the exclusive Examination Institute for the delivery of AXELOS' programs worldwide since 2018.

Last year, PeopleCert completed the acquisition of the International Association for Six Sigma Certification (IASSC), the global Professional Association dedicated to growing and enhancing the standards within the Lean Six Sigma Community.

## **CLOSING REMARKS**



Magawa and Malen (Image: Apopo)

Regular readers will recall Magawa the rat. Having cleared more than 141,000 square metres of land, the equivalent of some 20 football pitches, Malawa struck a blow for diversity when he was awarded a gold medal by the British veterinary charity People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA) – the first time the award has been made to an animal other than a dog.

After a five-year career in which he sniffed out 71 landmines and dozens more unexploded items in Cambodia, he is retiring. There are thought to be up to six million landmines in the South East Asian country. Malen, his handler, says the seven-year-old African giant pouched rat is "slowing down" as he reaches old age, and she wants to "respect his needs".

Magawa is well travelled – he was trained by the Belgium-registered charity Apopo, in Tanzania and deployed to Cambodia. Apopo has been raising the animals, known as HeroRATs, in the art of landmines detection since the 1990s. The animals are certified after a year of training. Interestingly, this is a longer training period than most non-graduate Project Managers undergo!



## 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, USA and Russia. 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 was, for seven years, 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](mailto:miles.shepherd@msp-ltd.co.uk).