

## UK Project Management Round Up



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### INTRODUCTION

On re-reading last month's report, I noticed a certain repetition in the macro-events in UK. I went on a brief holiday north of the border and found that on arrival in the whisky capital of the world, we had changed Leaders. This is worthy of comment so I'll come back to this shortly. This also reminded me that we have whisky in UK and in some other parts of the world we have whiskey which set me off on a semantic trail that might aid PMs so read on as such linguistic differences impact PM (and OIL).

### GOOD NEWS

First up in the Good News section is that Bond Street Station is finally open! Passengers on the new Elizabeth Line in London were only able to stare at the deserted and unfinished station as trains passed though until the second half of October, while the rest of the line opened 5 months earlier.

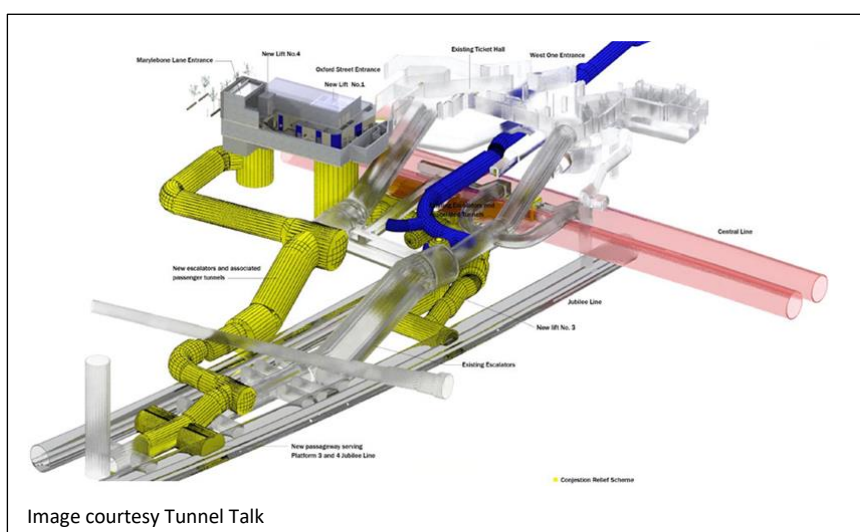


Image courtesy Tunnel Talk

As the graphic shows, the Station is a complex structure. It is open 4 years late and £500 million over budget.

While this opening just about finishes the major work on Crossrail, many in the North of England are questioning the £666 million cost on a single station while

they have seen the cancellation of the Leeds link and no funding for the Trans Pennine Rail link (Liverpool to Hull via Manchester).

Interestingly, The Times writes about cost escalation on the Station stating that “Project managers made late changes, adding an eastern ticket hall...” Oh that we had such power! We could sort out many projects suffering from poor scope. I mention this as it is the first time I have seen Project Managers publicly blamed for project problems. Let us hope someone has corrected this calumnious statement!

Autumn in UK lends itself to cosy dinners and gatherings round the table to catch up with friends and colleagues so it is a good time to hold award ceremonies and institutional dinners. One of the most prestigious of those related to the Project World is the Stirling Prize, awarded by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). The prize is presented to "the architects of the building that has made the greatest contribution to the evolution of architecture in the past year". The entrants must be RIBA members and the building must be in UK. This year, the shortlist comprised:

- ❖ [100 Liverpool Street](#), London (Hopkins Architects): a net zero development encompassing a dramatic renovation and extension of a 1980s office block to create a suite of offices and commercial and public spaces in the heart of London's financial district.
- ❖ [Forth Valley College – Falkirk Campus](#), Scotland (Reiach and Hall Architects): a set of three cutting-edge higher-education facilities connected by courtyards and open learning spaces.
- ❖ [Hackney New Primary School and 333 Kingsland Road](#), London (Henley Halebrown): a striking red-brick complex that uniquely combines affordable housing with a new primary school for the growing east London community.
- ❖ [Orchard Gardens, Elephant Park](#), London (Panter Hudspith Architects): a playful cluster of buildings forming a new city block of 228 new homes and retail spaces wrapped around a communal garden – a major element of Elephant and Castle's regeneration programme.
- ❖ [Sands End Arts and Community Centre](#), London (Mæ Architects): a welcoming, fully accessible single-storey building arranged around a disused lodge comprising flexible activity spaces and a community café.
- ❖ [The New Library, Magdalene College](#), Cambridge (Niall McLaughlin Architects): an exquisitely detailed timber-framed library and study space, designed to replace that previously gifted by Samuel Pepys and projected to survive for another 400 years.

The links above take you to full descriptions of the finalists. The winner, announced on 13 October, is the New Library at Magdalene College, Cambridge.



Magdalene New Library. Images: Nick Kane/RIBA vis BBC website

## INSTITUTIONAL EVENTS

### ➤ Association for Project Management (APM)

Quite a lot has been happening institutionally here in UK. As already reported, this is the year for celebrating anniversaries and APM is marking its Golden Jubilee. So this is a time to celebrate and make adjustments.

- ✓ New Website: APM launched a fully revised website at the end of October, part of it's rebranding. Full details may be found at: <https://www.apm.org.uk/news/apm-reveals-new-brand/> while a new introductory video is at [https://youtu.be/d8rmh\\_yElwQ](https://youtu.be/d8rmh_yElwQ)
- ✓ New Chair of Trustees: **Milla Mazilu**, Principal Programme Controls Manager at Network Rail Wales and Western Region, has been elected as the new chair of Association for Project Management (APM) by the organisation's Board of Trustees. I hope to have an interview with Milla in a future report.
- ✓ APM Annual General Meeting 14 Nov held online again this year. This is likely to be an interesting event as a change is being proposed to the composition of the Board of Trustees.
- ✓ APM Annual Awards is always a colourful event and this year moves to a new venue, the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge, London on 21 November. It is to be hosted by the well known TV personality Hugh Dennis. Award categories and finalists are listed here: <https://www.apm.org.uk/apm-awards/#TIER1>
- ✓ Excellence Awards for APM's Corporate Partnership Programme took first prize at this year's Association Excellence Awards. Also on the night, *Project*, APM's

quarterly journal, won a Bronze award in the category of 'Best Association Newsletter, Blog, Online or Physical Publication (circulation over 20,000)'.

- Project Management Institute United Kingdom Chapter is very good at listing its events but has little detail on its achievements so I can only highlight a couple of forthcoming events.
- ✓ Webinar – Shields Up: Cybersecurity is online on 8 November and sounds like a very useful contribution, particularly in the light of recent security breaches at senior levels in the UK Government. According to the website, Cybersecurity is complex and aligning it to a multitude of international standards can be problematic. In **Dr. Greg Skulmoski's** presentation, attendees will be introduced to a project management approach that combines standards and is tailored to cybersecurity projects.
- ✓ Glasgow Event a couple of days later, on 10<sup>th</sup>, covers tools and techniques. PMI UK are including in this event the Glasgow Uni arm of Enactus who are an amazing organisation of students using entrepreneurial skills to help charitable causes and are a strong partner with PM.

More Good News comes from the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) with the launch of its Project Set Up Toolkit. It is well known that projects that focus proper attention on the early phases of development are more likely to deliver the intended benefits, at pace. In collaboration with our community, the IPA has developed an integrated suite of tools to support project set-up. An overview of the toolkit as well as detailed descriptions are available from the IPA at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/project-set-up-toolkit>.

## **BAD NEWS**

This item could also feature under Good News but it all depends on your political perspective. As noted in the Introduction, we had another change of Prime Minister, or OIL as they are better known, while I was *en route* to Scotland. While not unexpected, it is getting a bit much as this is the third incumbent we have had in the last three months. One wonders whether such a conglomeration of Prime Ministers constitutes an OIL slick. Whatever you call it, a new set of financial priorities is sure to follow, with all the uncertainties that implies for the Project Manager. Some threats to consider include HS2, the nuclear programme and private industry.

### ➤ **Project Budgets – HS2**

One of the problems of rotating Governments is the constant shifts in policy. What brought matters to a head here was Budget that many observers felt was inadequate at the policy level. The incoming regime has reversed a number of policy shifts such as support for fracking – last week it was OK this week it is not allowed. One of the long term projects, and one the largest in Europe is High Speed 2 (HS2), has been a cornerstone of Government levelling up policy. Despite what has seemed like never ending cost increases, we now hear rumours that HS2 could be at risk of scaling back as the new OIL seeks £50 billion in savings to balance the Budget. Regular readers



will recall that HS2 is intended to reduce journey time between London, Birmingham and Manchester but one of the key Ministers, responsible for the whole levelling up programme, has let it be known that its budget could be under threat. Details are expected before the Bank of England announce the new interest rates on 2 November. It is not just HS2 under threat as the Chancellor of the Exchequer seeks far reaching cuts to spending while maintaining key services. Defence spending is another target mainly because its projects have a dreary habit of escalating which makes it hard to maintain a budget set to increase annually by 2%.

More pain is sure to follow so watch this space as the Chancellor has “difficult decisions to take”.

➤ **Project Budgets – Nuclear**

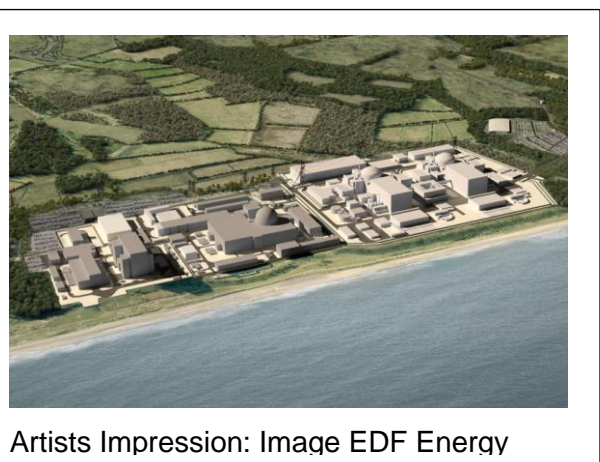


Image: EDF Energy

We have been warning of problems in the funding of new nuclear for several years so it is no surprise that the Fourth Estate has picked up on this. Last month, *The Sunday Times* ran a full page op ed “The hunt for cash to fund Britain’s new nuclear age. A side bar raised alarm by speculating on the ability of France to keep lights on, citing problems in France which has more than half its 56 strong reactor fleet out of action due to corrosion problems. According to

Press reports, owner EDF are struggling to generate sufficient electricity for the country’s needs and a forecast €29 billion hit in income. The first question is how they can cover rising costs at Hinkley C?

The second question is what is the future of the planned reactors at Sizewell? The first Prime Minister in October struck an agreement with the French President to co-operate on this latest project, pledging “full support” for the station set for Suffolk’s coast, to be developed by French energy company EDF” and that they expected the “relevant bodies to finalise arrangements in the coming month”. The Prime Minister (first half of the year) also promised £700 million to get the ball rolling and called on the industry to “go nuclear and go large and go with Sizewell C”. Sizewell B is now 27 years old and the newest of post Magnox nuclear plants. All these are owned and operated by EDF. The new Sizewell reactor will be the same design as Hinkley C and so should be “cheaper” to build. Government policy announced in March this year is for nuclear to provide 25% of Britain’s electricity which would require six new nuclear power stations. The current Prime Minister was reported at the time to be concerned about funding these, but then he was the



Artists Impression: Image EDF Energy

Chancellor of the Exchequer. The latest press reports claim the Government is aiming at windfall taxing energy suppliers as their profits have skyrocketed since the Ukraine war began. The Fourth Estate claim such moves are a disincentive for investment. We await further news with bated breath as all such developments bring employment for project people, increase PM skills and add to the Body of Knowledge.

### ➤ **Project Budgets – Other Industries**



Image: Greg Robinson/Virgin Orbit

It is not just the big ticket projects that have funding problems and they can often draw on previous experience. At Sizewell C, the director for Financial Regulation is the person who successfully made the case for funding Hinckley C. Smaller industries and their start-ups are also finding the financial going difficult. Virgin Orbit is reported to be seeking additional funding after its US special purpose acquisition company or “Spac” share listing raised less than

half of the planned \$483 million last year. This comes at a difficult time for the firm as it prepares to deploy satellites from the first ever space launch from UK soil. The mission will launch from Spaceport Cornwall in the first half of November, after final clearance has been granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. The launch date has slipped from an earlier target of September as the company awaits regulatory approval.

This RAF flew Virgin’s LauncherOne rocket from the US to Cornwall, ahead of the mission, which will be called “Start Me Up”. The rocket will carry seven small satellites into space, including two for the Ministry of Defence. The launcher will take off on the wing of a converted Boeing 747, detach in mid-air, and proceed into the atmosphere.

Air Vice-Marshal Paul Godfrey of UK Space Command said: “The very first space launch, carrying government and industry satellite payloads, marks Start Me Up as a historic moment for the UK.” He might have added that it is pretty important project achievement, too.

### ➤ **Alternative Funding**

Another factor in the rotating Prime Ministerial saga is BREXIT. Just as you thought we had heard the last of it, back it comes as a Halloween fright. Readers won’t remember the details of negotiations over how the City interacted with the European Union and it is too tedious to repeat it now but in an era of tough negotiations, it seemed that here in UK we would stick to European rules on things like the cap on Banker’s bonuses (BBS) and pension fund investment in infrastructure and other projects. However, it seems OIL 2 and her Business Secretary have responded to lack of progress and have binned the BBS as a slacker’s charter – I’ll leave you to work out how a scheme that rewarded good performance was replaced by one that simply increased salary was seen as helpful. More significantly, Solvency II, a Euro-regulation designed to safeguard pension annuity investments has been seen by some

in UK (mainly Insurance Companies) as singularly unhelpful as it prevents them from investing in higher yielding assets that would reap better returns for pensioners.

The Bank of England's Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) agrees to some extent but wants more funding set aside than the Insurers currently do as a buffer in case the investments go belly up. All so British so far. However, former Prime Minister OIL/1 saw a loosening of the restrictions as a BREXIT benefit and was supportive. Analysts agree, in general, that binning Solvency II is a) likely and b) safeguards for pension funds are still needed. So, what to do? The answer is, of course, the classic British Compromise. Quite what that will be is difficult to foretell but Sam Wood of the PRA is still in the process of finalising the regulator's thinking on Solvency II. The previous government's growth agenda is no bad thing, but as reported in The Sunday Times, we may regret it at leisure if we deregulate in haste.

## OTHER ITEMS

New heading – for those things that I wanted to share with you but had nowhere else to put them, I hope you find this useful. First up – language. As a native English speaker and therefore monoglot as tradition notes, I felt I should warn you that I am in fact bilingual: I speak fluent English (English) and English (American). I can also order a meal and a beer in other languages but am not fluent. This is what we expect of those active in the Project World. I raise this as there are some pitfalls for those who only speak one form of English as words do not always mean the same in both versions. We all know about motor vehicle differences such as bonnet and hood, boot and trunk but did you know that some words we rely on the Projectsphere differ? For instance, according to the UK Press, any departure from the official plan results in *CHAOS* the impact of which *STUNS* those affected. So when you report the latest slippage in your project, expect the Project Sponsor to be stunned at the chaos resulting from your delay.

## CLOSING REMARKS

### ➤ Osprey breeding @ Belvoir Castle

We've head of the accidental profession many times over the years but here is an accidental project. Many readers will know that we have been working to reintroduce various species that became extinct in previous centuries, I've reported on beavers and bison in previous issues. Avian species have also been the target of recent programmes and we have met with some success as Red Kites, Sea Eagles, Cranes and Storks have all been reintroduced and to some extent, are flourishing. One of the earliest species to be reintroduced is the Osprey which returned to Scotland way back in 1954, Ospreys returned for the first time to breed in 1954 to Loch Garten near Aviemore. This was a natural recolonisation from Scandinavian stock, but the birds needed a huge amount of help and protection to breed there successfully. Since then, the breed has spread to a number of other locations including several parts of Scotland, one site in Cumbria, two in Wales, and at one artificially re-colonised site in Anglia: Rutland Water. There are now approximately 250 breeding pairs in the UK, producing around 260 chicks a year.



The most recent successes are at Belvoir Castle, in Rutland, where Beth Dunstan managed the eight-year breeding project, said it was "a real triumph for persistence, teamwork and collaboration". She, and project staff, were celebrating after the first Osprey chicks were born at the site in more than 200 years. While not uncommon in other jurisdictions, notably the Americas, they have been persecuted in Europe for generations but efforts continue to bring the species back. Interestingly, Belvoir is pronounced "Beaver"! Apparently, the name Belvoir is a Norman word imposed by the French-speaking invaders of the 11th century, but the native Anglo-Saxon population was unable to get their tongues around such fancy foreign words, preferring to call it "Beaver".



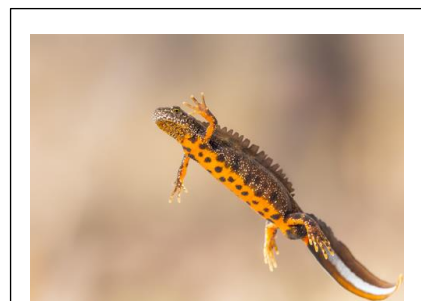
Image: Jo Price

### ➤ Terraforming.

Those of a certain age may recall a genre of science fiction books by the likes of Robert Heinlein and Larry Niven on transforming planets in remote galaxies by a process of terraforming. We seem to have done a pretty poor job of transforming earth which has resulted in the climate crisis we find ourselves in. The less pessimistic readers will be pleased to note some small successes in UK. The first report is more about unexpected results than anything planned. According to "experts", a sighting of a Lesser Spotted woodpecker can be attributed to organic farming. This species is the smallest of UK's three woodpecker, about the size of a house sparrow, and is thought to be down to only 12 breeding pairs in the rural county of Dorset. The landowner, Rex Fisher, highlighted his adoption of less industrial farming methods. "We want a wild farm and believe our method will help nature". A small success but as they say in Scotland, many a muckle makes a mickle.

On a somewhat larger scale comes a press report of a former industrial wasteland becoming one of England's largest urban nature reserves. The area, in the industrial heartland of Northern England includes the "flashes" of Wigan and Leigh in Lancashire, a series of shallow artificial lakes formed about 120 years ago when intensive coalmining caused rapid subsidence.

Over time, this area has become a wetland habitat and is regarded as a refuge for rare species including bittern, water voles and great crested newts. Now a National Nature Reserve (NNR) covering about 740 hectares, it is the first in the Greater Manchester area and joins 225 other NNRs in England.



Great Crested Newt Image:  
Suffolk Wildlife Trust





One last snippet – the Northern Pool Frog is NOT extinct. Last heard in more than 30 years ago, a specimen has been found in Eastern England. Once considered an invasive species, it is now considered to be a native. “It’s not often you get a species that jumps from invasive to native to extinct in a decade” according to John Baker of the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust. Amen to that!

## 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@m-sp-ltd.co.uk](mailto:miles.shepherd@m-sp-ltd.co.uk).