

UK Project Management Round Up



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INTRODUCTION

The last month seems to have been rather slow from a Project World perspective, or perhaps I have had my mind on other things (shocking thought, I know but as the Festive Season looms, there are distractions). So we have some good news (at last), some Bad News (as usual) and a short round up of other items.

GOOD NEWS

➤ November proved to be a good month for some as the **Association for Project Management** (APM) held its annual Awards event at the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge, London on Monday 21st. Sponsored by RPC UK Ltd and compered by the well-known comedian Hugh Dennis, awards were presented to a variety of projects, programmes and individuals. Several hundred people attended the event which was also live streamed which allowed members all round the world to feel part of the action. I've enjoyed several of these galas over the years but have to say it is not quite the same when you are sitting in the home office with a glass of wine but no crowd (except on the screen)!



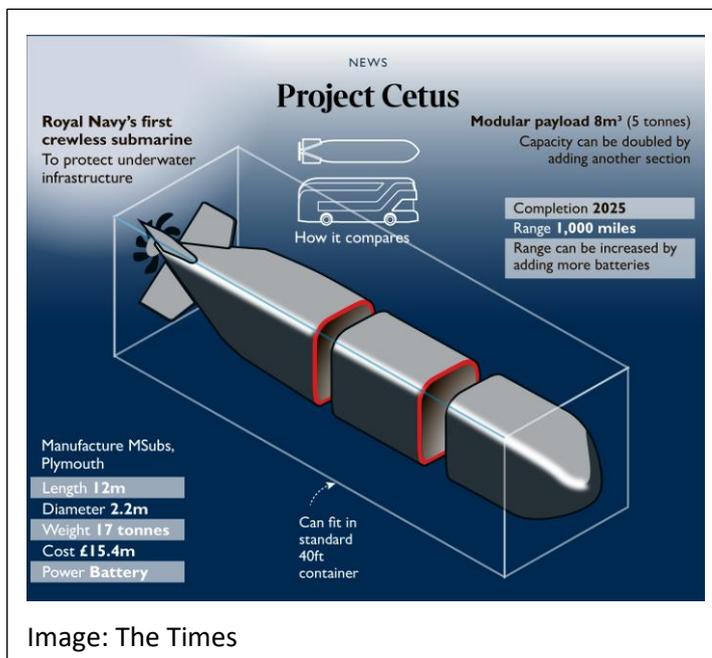
APM President Sue Kershaw, Nick Smallwood & Hugh Denis (Image: APM)

The outstanding Achievement Award went to **Nick Smallwood**, Chief Executive Officer of the Infrastructure and Projects Authority and Head of Government's Project Delivery Function, in recognition of his many achievements during a celebrated career in project management and delivery. He commented: "It's a great honour to be presented with the Outstanding Achievement Award.

"I find great satisfaction in working within a profession that truly transforms the country that we live in. Projects ultimately

deliver the public services that allow the UK to thrive, innovate and prosper - and people are of course at the very heart of this.” The full results are available at <https://www.apm.org.uk/apm-awards/> .

➤ **Defence Projects.** We have previously reported on pilotless sub-sea vessels, particularly those used for exploration and environmental research. Now comes news of another use as a new project for the Royal Navy has been approved. Project Cetus is a £15.4 million project; the Cetus is named after the mythological sea monster that was slain by Perseus. It consists of a pilotless battery-powered drone able to cover up to 1,000 miles in a single mission. It joins the Navy’s crewless mine-hunting capabilities and driverless Pacific 24 sea boats which are currently undergoing sea trials.



Cetus has been purchased to strengthen the navy’s ability to protect underwater infrastructure. Due for delivery in two years’ time, it would help the UK to “dominate the underwater battlespace” according to **Admiral Sir Ben Key**, the First Sea Lord. The Royal Naval press release claims that “it will move stealthily through the oceans, monitoring hostile activity, listening out for ships or submarines which may pose a threat to the Fleet, or to key national infrastructure such as deep-sea cables and pipelines.”

➤ **Vampires Beware.** More good news in the medical world even if it is not labelled a project. Researchers at University of Bristol are using laboratory-grown blood in British patients for the first time, in a study that doctors hope could improve treatment for patients who need regular donations. Small scale tests in the world-first trial will see a few teaspoons of blood grown from the stem cells of donors transfused into 10 volunteers. The benefits from this project accrue to those who need regular transfusions, such as patients with sickle cell anaemia, by reducing the number of transfusions needed.

This is achieved by using blood made from stem cells. These are a precursor of blood and according to Ashley Toyne, Professor of Cell Biology at the University of Bristol and director of the NIHR Blood and Transplant Unit “*When you have donated blood, about a quarter of [it] is old blood and it gets cleared quickly by your body.*” In contrast, when stem cell blood “enters the body “ . . . it will turn into a red blood cell. So it’s a very

super new fresh red blood cell . . . So we're giving somebody a whole bunch of new cells, and they should last for as long as a freshly made blood cell does." This reduces the likelihood of "iron overload".

If the technique is clinically validated then in the longer term doctors hope it could be possible to also manufacture rarer blood types this way, to cut down on shortages. *"For very rare blood types, there might only be say ten donors or 20 donors,"* said Professor Toye.

➤ **Benefits Management.** While on the topic of benefits, we learn that the British Standards Institute (BSI) has reached a major milestone in its latest project-related Standard. A team has been working on a new Standard on Benefits Management. BSI released a Draft for Public Comments some months ago. The commenting period closed last month and comments received have been collated and will be resolved by the drafting committee next month. Publication is expected in Spring 2023.

BAD NEWS

➤ **More Benefits Management.** Speaking of benefits reminds me that not all benefits are positive. Regular readers may recall that we commented on the problems encountered by the John Lewis Partnership with their new stock system for their Waitrose supermarket chain. Persistent reports indicate Industry-wide supply chain challenges have been compounded by the bungled integration of a new enterprise resource planning (ERP) system. Now we learn that John Murphy, the long serving COO has resigned. While many of the ERP system shortcomings have been resolved by a major system upgrade project, it does demonstrate that failure to deliver expected benefits can have consequences.

➤ **Post Project Review.** You may recall the highly effective efforts of the UK Vaccine Task Force. It was widely recognised for its efficiency and can-do attitude. The head of this team was **Dame Kate Bingham** and Director General (DG) was **Nick Elliott**. Nick is a project specialist and member of APM. Bingham has been appearing before the Science and Health Select Committees claiming that her "very specific" recommendations on bringing together government and the private sector has "not happened", and vaccines policy is led by a civil servant with a background in defence. She is reported to have gone on to say that *"I'm beginning to think this is deliberate government policy just not to invest and not to support the sector."*

For many on the side lines, the solution owed a great deal to the involvement of the Armed Forces and the DG was a former senior officer in the Royal Engineers so perhaps the involvement of a Civil Servant with a Ministry of Defence background does not come as much of a surprise. **Dame Jenny Harries**, head of the UK Health Security Agency, said Bingham *"may not be seeing everything that's happening"*, insisting that her work *"is ongoing and I think that will become evident as our plans materialise"*. She agreed Bingham's vision on vaccines *"is exactly what the UK Health Security Agency wants to do. It's one of the most exciting opportunities in science that's come from the pandemic"*.

OTHER ITEMS

➤ **Great British Nuclear is GO!** After months of delay caused mainly by the problems caused by the rapid turnover of Prime Ministers, Great British Nuclear (GBN) has been launched along with the latest strategy statement. This august body is intended to “take steps to secure Britain’s Energy Independence. The Government announcement (see <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-government-takes-major-steps-forward-to-secure-britains-energy-independence> for the full launch details) sets out these priorities:

- UK government confirms historic decision to back Sizewell C’s development, set to generate reliable, clean electricity for 6 million UK homes, and deliver thousands of high-value jobs in Suffolk and nationwide
- Business Secretary commits to taking forward the Energy Bill, a major step forward in building a secure future that is powered by cheaper, cleaner British energy, for Britain
- comes alongside government push to help households cut energy usage – and with it their bills

Not only Sizewell C but several small reactors are promised Government support so this must be good news for Project people. Interestingly, after the launch came news that the government is to blow around £100 million to buy a Chinese state company out of the Sizewell C nuclear plant. This is in line with the intention reported on these pages last month that the Government and EDF, the French developers of Sizewell C, take joint control of the scheme until external investors could be secured to fund its construction. This is currently estimated to cost up to £30 billion.



Artists impression of Sizewell C (Image EDF)

Ministers confirmed that they were making a payment to China General Nuclear (CGN) to secure its exit as part of a “historic” £679 million investment in the Suffolk plant. The business department said the sum was “commercially confidential” but three sources said it was in the region of £100 million, reflecting the Chinese group’s investment in the project. Let’s hope the investment holds up as a major threat from coastal erosion was cited as one reason for the refusal of planning permission that has since been overturned.

➤ **Hydrogen Engines** are being tested by Rolls-Royce and EasyJet. Tests of the world’s first successful modern jet engine powered by hydrogen have taken place at Boscombe Down, a Ministry of Defence aircraft testing site near Salisbury, Wiltshire. A Rolls Royce AE 2100-A regional aircraft engine converted to run on hydrogen fuel.



Image: Rolls-Royce plc

Fueled by green hydrogen produced by The European Marine Energy Centre. The fuel is so called as because it was generated with renewable energy from the centre’s tidal energy plant in the Orkney Islands.

Rolls-Royce and EasyJet announced their plans to develop hydrogen engine technology at the Farnborough Airshow in July. It is hoped that a range of aircraft can be delivered in the mid-2030s. Under their plans, operational understanding of

consumer air flying has been contributed by EasyJet, while Rolls-Royce contributes its engine development expertise to the project. The universities of Cranfield and Loughborough are also working on the programme.

CLOSING REMARKS

➤ **Hen Harriers in Wiltshire**

Another rescue project involving wildlife has been launched in my home county. The project aims to breed Hen Harriers in captivity and then release them into the wild on Salisbury Plain. This is first time Harriers have been bred in captivity in UK. According to reports in BirdGuides, a dozen birds – six males and six females – have been brought from France and Spain to establish breeding pairs, in a joint project between Natural England and the International Centre for Birds of Prey. The aim is to release at least 100 birds over the next five or more years. The young Hen Harriers were rescued from nests in crop fields in France by volunteers, who ensured that the chicks were saved before the combines move in. Two additional birds are being brought in from Spain. The birds will begin to breed next spring, although the new pairs may not produce enough chicks for release into the wild until 2024.

Hen Harrier's only English breeding populations are currently on northern moorlands, where the species has been persecuted in recent decades. Hen Harrier hasn't bred in southern England for decades but it nests on the ground in lowland grassland and arable fields on the continent. Conservationists believe it can thrive again on English farmland without persecution – if birds are returned there.



Male Hen Harrier (Image: blickwinkel / Alamy)

Suitable sites for reintroduction have been identified by the University of Exeter which has concluded it would be best to reintroduce the birds on areas of grassland and farmland, which are common in southern England, rather than isolated moorlands such as Exmoor and Dartmoor. While much of Salisbury Plain is Ministry of Defence land, where the birds should therefore be free from persecution, Natural England has spent four years talking to farmers and game shoots in surrounding Wiltshire.

Simon Lee, a senior adviser at Natural England, the government's conservation watchdog, told the *Guardian*: "The southern reintroduction project is an excellent example of international collaboration to drive species recovery. Working together, we hope to create a sustainable population, which supports the long-term revival of this much-loved species.

"We were nervous when we started to talk to people about it because of the history of persecution and the dynamic between conservationists and the shooting industry but we were very, very pleasantly surprised by the reaction. "The overwhelming response was actively supportive. The one thing harriers have no impact on whatsoever is typical Common Pheasant and Red-legged Partridge shoots. Harriers are way too small to take as a pheasant."

➤ Birds and Otter Protection in Shetland



This comes under the heading of Spaceport projects but also is a small but significant project related to wildlife. The operators of the SaxaVord Spaceport on Unst, in the Shetland Isles, plan to implement a "no-launch" window between mid-May and late June each year "to avoid disturbing birds during the critical incubation and early brooding period". A total of 135 species including Puffins, Merlins, plovers and Arctic terns can be found

within an area that could be affected by the "explosive noise" of rocket launches.

SaxaVord has also been advised to protect otters by creating “additional holts and shelters, many with soundproofing from turfs” to give the animals a place to hide from the noise of launches and warning sirens. It has already built an underpass for otters under the road that will be used to transport rockets to the launchpad. Rockets start blasting off from Britain’s first “vertical” spaceport next year.

➤ **Next Month**

A report on UK spaceports and a look ahead to a couple of interesting Royal projects
In the meantime, enjoy the festive season! See you next year.

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.