

## UK Project Management Round Up



*By Miles Shepherd  
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### INTRODUCTION

If we were on the cusp of Spring at my last report, we are well and truly spring now. Spring flowers are blooming everywhere with splendid splashes of yellow in hedgerows and roadside verges. Somehow this is appropriate as the economy is looking a little jaundiced just now and that forms a backdrop for this month's lessons for Project Managers. [stakeholders, risk appetite, benefits judgement...]

### GOOD NEWS

- Top of the list again is the **BREXIT situation**. Last month, I reported the tortuously negotiated agreement over the treatment of produce coming into and out of Northern Ireland. Apart from any macro-economic significance, there were (and still are) even more important political issues to consider. This is not the place to consider such politics except to note their overwhelming significance and last month the Nation was poised on the edge of its collective chair to see how the agreement would fare in a vote in the House of Parliament. The good news is that it did very well and easily passed the vote in London. There remains some opposition in Belfast and how that will be handled remains to be seen but for now, the Country can get back to building a healthy and mutually respectful relationship with Europe. I sincerely hope 22 March will go down in history as the end of BREXIT.



Photo by Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

- **Carbon Capture Use and Storage (CCUS)** policy recently announced by the Government is another event of major importance not just to UK but to the world. It comes with the announcement of £20 billion funding for carbon capture projects

around the United Kingdom. Trailed in early March as part of the Chancellor of the exchequer's Spring Budget statement, the Government has committed (I think, it is always hard to know precisely what politicians mean with their vague announcements on major policy issues) to a mixed programme based on half a dozen carbon capture and storage projects around the east coast and Merseyside. Sites are expected to include Keadby 3 gas fired power station in Lincolnshire (see my reports last year) and HyNet hydrogen power scheme in Liverpool Bay. Ministers have been mulling the technology for more than 20 years and, according to press reports, are now under increasing pressure to act, with the UK off-track to hit its legally binding net-zero targets. Some observers will feel this view is just the Press blowing smoke but the joint statements by the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero and Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-carbon-capture-and-storage-government-funding-and-support> ) in 2019 set the scene and detail this year has continued the theme, although press views vary between wild enthusiasm and implied criticism as funding is not all give away and will come in part from energy bill levees on consumer bills.

➤ **CC Technology** There are four main types of CC technology:

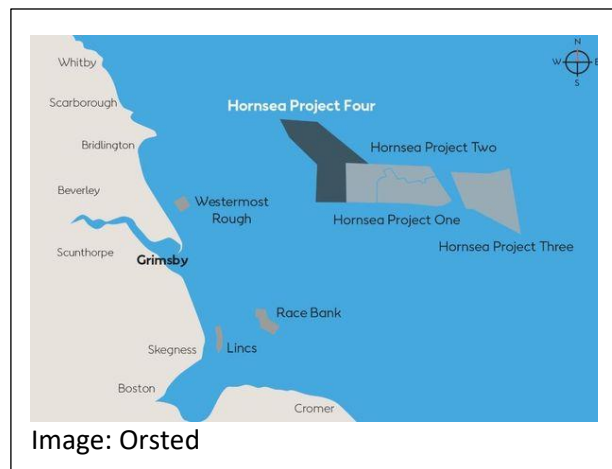
- **Carbon sinks** – are well known natural forms of CCS. Most are vast spaces where the natural habitats capture CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere and are mostly forests, oceans, grasslands and wetlands. Scientists, as well as environmental and conservation experts, claim that the preservation and cultivation of these carbon sinks could increase the amount of carbon taken from our atmosphere in the shortest space of time.
- **Giant air filters** – these are currently mostly experimental, consisting of huge towers that clean air of pollutants on a vast scale. The towers purify air by drawing it into glass rooms, which are heated using solar power creating a greenhouse effect. This hot air up is pushed up the tower through a series of filters, before being released back into the atmosphere as clean air. One such giant air-purifier tower in Xian has reportedly been cleaning more than 353 million cubic feet of air each day, dramatically improving local air quality. Manufacturers believe they are close to developing even larger towers, where just one could clean enough air on a daily basis for a small city.
- **Ionic liquids** – these are the most recent advances in CCS technology includes new types of liquids, which are highly effective at absorbing CO<sub>2</sub>. Two dimensional 'ionic' liquids have a molecular structure that allow for higher rates of CO<sub>2</sub> to be absorbed. Scientists believe 'editing' liquids can offer more precise control in the chemical engineering process and are considered environmentally friendly. A great deal more research is needed before this technology is ready for adoption.

- **Saline aquifers** – this is the technology proposed for the UK government’s plan and are underground geological formations; vast expanses of porous, sedimentary rock, which are filled with salt water. CO<sub>2</sub> can be injected into these and stored permanently – in fact, saline aquifers have the largest identified storage potential among all other forms of engineered CCS. The ‘Endurance’ aquifer, located in the North Sea off the coast of the UK, is one such formation, which sits approximately 1 mile (1.6km) below the seabed. Roughly the size of Manhattan Island and the height of The Shard or the Empire State Building, its porous composition allows for carbon dioxide to be injected into it and stored safely for potentially thousands of years. According to **Tom Thackray**, CBI Director for Decarbonisation Policy, Carbon capture and nuclear power will not only reduce our carbon emissions but can help make the most of the significant economic opportunities that green growth can bring. Today’s announcement represents significant progress in realising our potential in technologies where the UK has distinctive strength.



### NOT SO GOOD NEWS

As we get good news on the carbon capture front, other not so welcome news emerges. Regular readers will recall reports concerning the Hornsea wind farm in the North Sea. This is billed as the world’s largest offshore development and is being developed in four stages as shown in the graphic right. Currently, phases 1 and 2 have been completed. Phase 3, located in the North Sea, is about 120 km off the Norfolk coast and 160 km off the Yorkshire coast. It consists of up to 231 offshore wind turbines located in a 696 km<sup>2</sup> area.



Capable of generating at least 2.85 GW of green electricity, enough to meet the average daily needs of well over 3 million homes the wind farm is a key part of UK’s drive towards Net Zero. Interestingly, recent press reports down grade the power output to cover just 2 million homes. It is due to begin production in 2026 but Danish renewable energy company Orsted, which is developing the site, claimed that it is no longer viable to build Hornsea Three. Press reports claim that the construction costs for Hornsea Three have risen by 20 per cent to £8 billion because of rising steel and other raw materials prices and supply chain issues. Terms were only agreed with the government last summer.

Orsted, along with several other developers and energy suppliers, is calling for generous tax breaks in this month’s budget. Orsted hope this will make the project

viable and “to ensure the UK remains an attractive destination for investors”. **Duncan Clark**, head of Orsted UK, said that if the government did not intervene by the end of April, “the project would have to go on hold” and Orsted would cancel reservations with companies in its supply chain. We await further developments.

## A TALE OF 110 TREES



Artists impression of new Armada Way

This is the spot where I report ecological projects, mostly because I find them interesting from an emotional perspective. There are, however, some practical aspects that offer lessons for Project Managers. The first is a cautionary tale about the perils of sponsorship and concerns a £12.7 million project in the city of Plymouth, in the west of England. The aim of the Armada Way regeneration project is to create a more impressive route from North Cross roundabout through the city centre and a

clear visual link to the sea, which was the original ambition of Armada Way. The project is part of an ongoing programme designed to address years of under-investment in city centre streets and space. New features planned include play and mixed use games areas for all ages, water-based play space and water fountain jets, dramatically improved café seating areas, attractive places to stop and rest, refurbished Braille Garden and Phoenix fountain, and a new stepped amphitheatre space, a new running water feature, and linear tree pits. This all sounds good and the plans looked impressive. Plans had been exhibited to the residents and modifications made in the light of comments received.

When it came to start the work, the area shown in the area outlined in red needed to be cleared so ground work and updating could take place. As ever, the idea that some trees would have to be cut down caused outrage and work was halted on 21 November 2022 to allow “concerns” regarding the removal of the existing trees to be considered.

According to the Council website, a multi-disciplinary design team made up of planners, engineers, landscape architects, urban designers, an ecologist and a specialist tree consultant considered the proposals to see if more of the existing trees could be incorporated within the project, or relocated elsewhere, while keeping the overall integrity of the scheme and its wider benefits. The modified scheme announced in late January 2023 proposed the retention of 24 existing trees and a total of 150 new semi-mature trees of various native and ornamental species more appropriate to a city centre setting.



Armada Way before the renovation

This brought the total of trees in the Armada Way scheme to 174. Expert advice was that transplanting more trees wasn't viable.

Protests continued until the Council leader signed an executive order to start work and 110 trees were cut down overnight. The Council leader was not the sponsor, nor the senior responsible officer; he was, however, convinced that the project should proceed. Backlash was inevitable and he resigned his political post. The lesson? I think there were several: first, taking overnight action seems to be asking for trouble and appears to show a degree of fear so the communications aspect needed more attention. Second, you can't please all the people all the time (well known to followers of President Abraham Lincoln) and the Council Chief was caught between the business interests of local traders and those for whom trees were more important than livelihoods. At least the project manager was not caught in the crossfire.

### **JUDGEMENT OF BENEFITS**

I was reading about the loss of rare species around the world and noted that the cute critters tended to have an easier time when it comes to preservation of red list species. For me, this raises the issue of benefits and how to judge them. If it is not possible to preserve all endangered species, how do you choose which to go for? As Project people, we *should* say that it depends on your objectives. *The Times* reports on a newly-updated metric from scientists at the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) which makes years of distinct evolutionary history the highest priority for conservationists to protect at least as far as mammals are concerned. ZSL reckon that if your goal is to preserve the diversity of life on earth, then evolutionary rarity matters as much as actual rarity. They illustrate this citing the case of the rhino: if one species of rhino dies out, it's a tragedy — but there is at least another closely-related species. The Times report compares this with the case of the Madagascan aye-aye, claiming the loss of a primate species with a spindly middle finger and yellow eyes that look perpetually terrified, then there is nothing on Earth that is close, unlike the rhino.

According to **Rikki Gumbs**, from ZSL "Ascribing value to conservation species is hard. There is the intrinsic value of species just existing. There is also the intrinsic value of distinctiveness. Do you look at it and think, it's so weird that it just has its own value because there's nothing else like it on Earth?" Now think about how you judge the benefits of your project.

### **CRICKET IN USA**

I have reported on the embryonic expansion of cricket in the United States. As previously noted, cricket was once a popular sport in USA and President Washington was a well-known devotee. Since his time, enthusiasm has waned somewhat but I am happy to report a new professional league is getting underway. Based on the shortest form of the sport, T20, Major League Cricket starts in July and is already attracting a significant number of world class players. It seems likely that the new league is aimed at raising the profile of the sport in what are normally non-cricketing countries ahead of the decision on whether this form should be part of the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

## CLOSING REMARKS



Regular readers will know of the expansion of the osprey in UK. Beginning in Scotland in the 1980s and now spreading to England, osprey reintroduction projects have been slow but successful in re-establishing the breed in UK. Now we learn that range expansion is even greater than previously thought as a Scottish osprey has been sighted in Barbados. **Tim Mackrill**, of the Osprey Leadership Foundation, said the bird's ring number had been photographed in Barbados on March 9. The osprey had its ring added on June 23 last year in Clyde

Muirshiel Regional Park, just 4,124 miles from Barbados. "As far as we are aware, this is the first time that a UK osprey has been observed in the Americas," said Mackrill. Seems a bit extreme way of avoiding the Scottish National Party leadership elections but then the bird may have missed its way – ospreys usually over-winter in Africa.

## About the Author



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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 stepped down as Chairman of the British Standards Institute project management committee in 2022. 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).