

UK Project Management Round Up



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INTRODUCTION

In the northern hemisphere, Spring has sprung and my surroundings are awash with new growth, particularly the trees in blossom and woodland flowers in full, colourful bloom. While this encourages me to look forward, it is also perhaps time to look back the Financial Year that closed at the start of last month. One of the most interesting developments came from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Jeremy Hunt, who announced five high growth sectors in his Spring Budget. These are interesting for several reasons but the most significant for us is that they are all dominated by projects management.

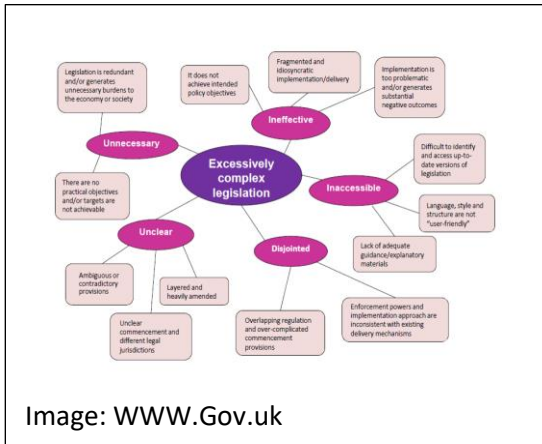
GOOD NEWS

➤ **BREXIT.** Just as you thought it was all over bar the shouting, the shouting has started, again. You may be wondering why this is in the Good News section but the shouting is over an outbreak of common sense, something we Project Managers (PMs) all need but many of our leaders seem to find it hard to employ. Thus I was reassured to read



that Brexiteers are angry that the wholesale axing of laws we freely negotiated and adopted while a member of the European Union (EU) has been reviewed and many due for the chop are to be retained. This news comes as the snappily titled *Retained EU Law Bill* transitions Parliament. Some 800 Laws will be removed from the UK statute book will be listed as **Kemi Badenoch**, the business secretary, attempts to get the legislation through the House of Lords. This has, perhaps predictably upset the

more rabid Brexiteer Members of Parliament who claim this is only about 20 per cent of existing EU laws on the UK statute book.



According to reports in the UK press, laws not explicitly named on the list will remain on the statute book and will be reviewed “in due course”. High-profile EU-derived laws including the Working-time Directive and environmental legislation are expected to be retained. As I said, an outbreak of common sense although the cynic might reflect that the Civil Servants, never the most fast moving officials, have not managed to analyse all 4,000 odd pieces of legislation –

thus making it difficult if not impossible to scrap more laws.

➤ New Science Funding Scheme

This might also come under the BREXIT banner as one of the major disadvantages to leaving the European Union was the loss of funding in key areas. Most troubling was the hit on science funding through the Horizon Programme. While this particular door is not fully closed now that the stumbling block of Northern Ireland access has been lifted, Ministers remain concerned that it may not represent value for money and have other unwelcome conditions. So we learn that the Pioneer Programme will provide £14 billion for the scientific sector.

This bespoke funding plan will act as the main funding mechanism for UK scientific research. Funding would cover academic scientific research and international collaboration. It would also work in areas such as quantum physics, engineering biology and green energy. Funding would also be made available to update scientific infrastructure such as new laboratories and other infrastructure not currently funded by Horizon Europe. Importantly, Pioneer would finance efforts to attract international scientific talent, ranging from PhDs for early career researchers at the start of their careers, to research fellowships for experts in their field.

The new programme will be focused on areas such as agrifood and climate change adaptation, where the UK is already strong. Government claims, almost certainly incorrectly if past experience is anything to go by, that Pioneer would also be more flexible than Horizon, with match investments from industry permitted and partnership development with other countries around the world, not just those within the EU.

According to **Michelle Donelan**, the science secretary, “Under Pioneer, all our funding would go to UK scientists and innovators,” said. “With this level of investment, Pioneer would supercharge our mission to cement and enhance our position as a science and tech superpower.” However, as *The Times* reports, ministers know that the vast

majority of the scientific community favours re-associating with Horizon despite having been locked out of the latest programme for two years.

➤ **Electric Aircraft**



This is a topic we have reported before but the latest developments are encouraging as BAE Systems announced a partnership with Swedish electric transport start-up Heart Aerospace which is developing the ES-30, powered by four electric motors. The aircraft will be able to fly 30 passengers over a range of 125 miles. This would enable flights from Heathrow in west

London to East Midlands airport near Derby or to Cardiff.

BAE have been out of the civilian aircraft sector for some time but was behind the last British-built civilian aircraft, the Avro RJX/BAE 146, which went out of production 20 years ago. In the new partnership, BAE will build batteries to power propellers for the ES-30.

Reports indicate that Heart is aiming for proof of concept in 2024 with flight trials in 2026 and an in-service target of 2028. It has equity backing from Air Canada, the airline operator, and putative orders or letters of interest for more than 400 aircraft, including from United Airlines, one of the world's largest carriers. However, it remains to be seen whether electric battery powered aircraft can have a meaningful impact on commercial aviation.

➤ **Flying Taxis**

Other aviation news is also encouraging as the Civil Aviation authority has granted Design Approval to Vertical Aerospace for their VX4 electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL). This "authorises Vertical to conduct design activities and issue design approvals".

The VX4 has a planned range of 100 miles, top speed of 200mph and can carry four passengers. It is 100 times



quieter than a cruising helicopter, according to the company. "I am immensely proud that Vertical is the first British electric aircraft company in history to receive a DOA from the UK aviation regulator," Stephen Fitzpatrick, who founded the company in

2016, said. “*This approval is a critical step forward in our mission to decarbonise air travel and bring the UK’s first electric aircraft to market.*”

Its pre-order book stands at 1,400 aircraft after potential customers including Virgin Atlantic signalled their interest. American Airlines, an investor in the group, has agreed to make pre-delivery payments for 50 aircraft. Shares in the Bristol-based start-up rose by 12 cents, or 5.9 per cent, to close at \$2.15 in New York after its statement.

BAD NEWS

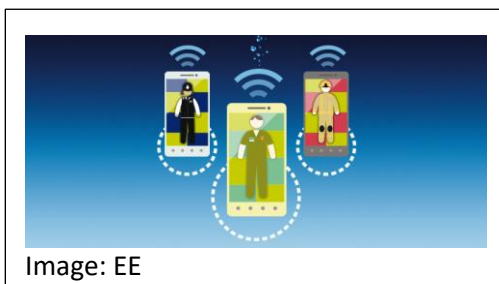


Image: EE

It seems almost unfair to expect IT related projects to come in as planned and the latest to attract the attention of our politicians is the Emergency Services Network or ESN. Originally launched in 2015, its aim is to replace the existing communications suites operated by the Police, Ambulance and Fire & Rescue

Services. It had a budget of £5.2 billion and was due in service by 2020. Now we learn it is likely to cost £11.3 billion and will not be operational until 2026. Interestingly, His Majesty’s Loyal Opposition claim the cost overrun could finance in excess of 90,000 police officers for one year or 20,000 for five years. This is a challenge that my basic mathematical skill has trouble reconciling but I guess politicians have a different logic. In the meantime, the Competition and Marketing Authority (CMA) capped the amount Motorola could charge for the system ESN is scheduled to replace. The original contract ran out in 2020 so Motorola could charge whatever they liked to continue the provision but the CMA imposed a cap of £200 million annually. ESN is being delivered by the Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme (ESMCP) in the Home Office. Infrastructure is being built by EE, by upgrading its existing network of around 19,000 masts, deploying 700 more 4G masts in rural areas and building new sites. The Home Office is supplementing this coverage by building 292 masts to give the emergency services coverage in some of the most remote and rural areas of Great Britain.

The ramifications of the conflict in Ukraine continue to impact the multinationals. In the wake of Western sanctions, Russia effectively nationalised several joint ventures that had Western partners. One such project was the Sakhalin-2 LNG project which was a joint development with Shell. The Kremlin apparently valued Shell’s 27.5 % stake at 94.8 billion roubles, or £920 million.

The Times reported that the Russian daily Kommersant suggested that Putin had authorised the payment of \$1.2 billion from Novatek to Shell for the stake. So far, Shell has yet to receive any cash. Shell booked a \$1.6 billion impairment to write off the value of its holding last year and has made no comment on the situation.

ADVANCED ENGINEERING

This is the first of the Chancellor's high growth sectors and is intended to showcase our ability to deliver on the technology and its capabilities. Typical of this sector is Tempest FCAS, a combat air demonstrator aircraft billed as a next-generation stealth fighter. Commissioned by the Ministry of Defence and being developed by a partnership led by BAE Systems. It is one of more than 60 technology demonstration projects ongoing across the Team Tempest partnership, spanning the full spectrum of combat air.

The first flight of the combat air demonstrator aircraft is set to take place within the next five years and to be in service with the British RAF by 2035. The flying demonstrator will be a piloted supersonic aircraft testing a range of new technologies including integration of stealth compatible features. It will provide evidence for the critical technologies, methods and tools, which will be used on the next generation future combat air system.



Image: GKN Aerospace Services Ltd

Press accounts of the programme claims its remit is to make science fiction become reality, producing aircraft, probably unmanned, commanding a swarming squadron of autonomous drones.

Lightweighting, composites, additive manufacturing, digital engineering, decarbonisation, marshalling the internet of things — all the buzzwords of advanced manufacturing will come together using technologies in development by a generation

of engineers who may not yet know the skills they need. The project is intended to sustain 20,000 jobs, although those roles will be far different from those that produced the Typhoon fighter jet.

According to BAE Systems Chief Executive Charles Woodburn *“The demonstrator is an exciting once-in-a-generation opportunity providing experienced and young engineers alike a chance to contribute to an endeavour which really matters to our national defence and security.”*

The aircraft is being developed by Team Tempest led by BAE Systems, the UK-based aerospace company. The team includes industry partners including Leonardo, an Italian aerospace company, MBDA UK, a division of European missile systems provider MBDA, and Rolls-Royce.

According to Ian Muldowney, chief operating officer of BAE's aerospace business, it is all about the development of sovereign technical skills to make the UK competitive in export markets. He argues that *“projects like Tempest will play a major role in a*

technology- driven economy and maintaining a world-leading advanced manufacturing sector here in the UK.” This is a little difficult to reconcile with the extensive partnership arrangements that include partners from Sweden and Japan as well as Italy.

Furthermore, as The Times points out, UK manufacturing has dwindled so much in recent years that it accounts for only 10 per cent of the economy. However, there are some green shoots to encourage Chancellor Hunt as data from the High Value Manufacturing Catapult suggests the sector ambitions remain high. The catapult comprises a group of technology centres around the country financed by the taxpayer, research funding and private capital. Its aim is to connect universities and private enterprise to get ideas or innovations from the laboratory or computer screen and accelerate them through development into industrial commercialisation.

CLOSING REMARKS



Image:Times/ Elliot Mccandless/Pa

Regular readers may recall the highly fashionable Beaver reintroduction programmes that seem to be taking place all over the United Kingdom (see March 2023 edition for summary). One report of wild beavers in Wales has raised some alarm even though this is the first wild, as opposed to reintroduced, beaver in this area in 400 years.

A couple in Pembrokeshire noted that “Some of our trees began to

go missing overnight and others were simply being mauled. It looked like someone was hitting them with a machete. There are no deer in Pembrokeshire, so we couldn't work out what was causing the damage. The only clue [was] some teeth marks left in the bark.” So they installed a trail camera and were astounded to find wild beaver creeping alone in the darkness, swimming in their pond and building itself a lodge under their deck. They have named the beaver “Anthony” after Antony Beevor, the author and military historian. Beavers can weigh up to 30kg and grow to the size of a large spaniel. Anthony has become as “fat as a pig” from spending up to six hours eating their tree trunks.

Now the puzzle is where did this happy critter come from? The closest official colony of beavers to Pembrokeshire is in the Dyfi Estuary more than 50 miles to the north on the coast, where no escapes have been reported. Wild populations have been discovered in Scotland's Tay-Forth catchment area, in east Devon's River Otter and on the Avon near Bristol. A similar beaver discovery was made in east Devon in 2014,

despite there being no reintroduction trials in the area. “It’s much more likely the beaver has been released in Pembrokeshire by a determined rewilder,” the landowners said.

Interestingly, although beavers are protected in England and Scotland, no such protection exists in Wales. The Pembrokeshire couple told The Times: “It looks like the Welsh government need to legislate or they’ll be in danger of trying to close the stable door after the horse has bolted. With so many enclosed beavers around Britain you wonder how long it will be before there are more escapees.”

An accidental project?

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.