

UK Project Management Round Up



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INTRODUCTION

It's a bit of a mixed bag this month as we are in the midst of the political silly season with the Party Conferences dominating the headlines. Nonetheless, I can bring you news of a long running project completion, some new projects and some sporting projects, and so on with the report.

SOMETHING OLD



Cathedral from the East – prior to completion Image: PAMedia

On 7 September, the East Gable of Salisbury Cathedral was blessed to mark the end of the restoration and repair work. This is a home-based project for me – I can see the Cathedral from my office window, so I had to report that this long-running project is complete.

Press reports claim this is the culmination of four decades of work on the historic cathedral but we have heard that before. Shortly after we moved here, the Prince of Wales (now King Charles III) came to close out the original project, scaffolding was removed and the appeal closed. A touch premature, we thought at the time, and so it proved as this latest project began in 1986. Anyway you look at it, there will be no scaffolding around the 13th Century building for the first time in decades.

Workers have been making their mark since the work began in 1986, chiselling out new carvings for masons of the future to discover. These include a carving a delicate baby dragon, a gecko, a bird in a nest, a sunflower and a ferret. *"It's a culmination of 37 years' worth of work which has brought us to this moment,"* said **Gary Price**, the cathedral Clerk of Works.



Clerk of works Gary Price inspects a new figure Image: PAMedia & BBC

"We have gone round and photographed, cleaned, pointed every single stone during the last 37 years. "We've worked our way clockwise around the building and we're finishing where they started the cathedral over 803 years ago, so it's quite fitting."

During these works, around 1,100 stones have been replaced, the windows have been cleaned, wooden frames restored, lead water goods repaired, and other remedial work has been undertaken over a period of 37 years, almost as long as it took to build the main Cathedral.

Although this project is complete, work continues and masons have now moved on to the North Cloisters, where they will spend the next four years restoring elaborately carved tracery and Purbeck columns, bases and capitals that have split.

SOMETHING NEW

September saw the decision to approve a deeply controversial project – the opening of a new oil field in the North Sea. The Rosebank Oil Field drilling has been condemned by environmental campaigners but hailed by supporters as a big step in bolstering the UK's energy security. Critics, on the other hand, said it would harm climate change targets and not reduce bills

The Rosebank oil and gas field lies about 80 miles north-west of Shetland. It is one of the largest undeveloped discoveries in UK waters and is said to contain up to 300

million barrels of oil. The field is owned by Norwegian energy giant Equinor and British firm Ithaca Energy.

The main argument is about the balance between environmental concerns and energy security, with a splash of jobs and local prosperity thrown in. Prime Minister **Rishi Sunak** said it was the "right long-term decision" for securing oil supplies in the UK

The run down of other fields in the North Sea has been causing concern for some time as there is little in Scotland to provide alternative employment. According to reports from the BBC, about 1,600 jobs are expected to be created during the peak of construction with 450 long term jobs during operation. Production is expected to start from 2026. If drilling does start on time, Rosebank could account for 8% of the UK's total oil production between 2026 and 2030.

SOMETHING LESS CONTROVERSIAL

Still on the Energy front comes news of future projects that will help transfer energy from as far afield as Morocco. A project to manufacture the world's longest subsea electricity cables in Scotland is seeking to raise £1.4 billion to start factory construction by next summer. The XLinks project is seeking to import solar and wind power from Morocco to Britain via a 2,360-mile cabling route. The project is led by the former Tesco boss **Sir Dave Lewis** and XLCC hopes to produce the high-voltage cables needed to transfer the power.

It already has planning permission for its proposed cabling factory at Hunterston in Ayrshire. According to The Times, **Ian Douglas**, XLCC chief executive, says it is in the final stages of appointing a merchant bank to begin the process of raising £1.4 billion in equity by the end of the first quarter of next year.

The aim is to break ground on the factory in the second quarter, produce the first test cables by 2026, enter commercial production by the end of 2027 and begin installation by 2028. The factory could produce 800 miles of cabling per year in its first phase. The go-ahead for the cable factory was not contingent on approval for the Moroccan project, which is still awaiting government backing.

XLCC's factory intends to produce the cable in pairs of segments each 100 miles long, which Douglas said would be "the longest length of cable in the market". This should reduce the time spent joining segments together at sea, which can take ten days at a time and requires waiting for favourable weather.

The factory will need a 185m tower to deliver such huge stretches of cable. The tower enables applying polymer insulation to the wire. The project will also need to make the biggest cable-laying vessel yet built, which will have two 12,000-tonne carousels for the coiled cable.

FUTURE TAXIS

Dozens of companies around the world have been developing eVTOL after their (electric Vertical Take-off and Landing) aircraft and we have been reporting their progress for the past two years. These aircraft promise quieter, cheaper and emission-free aircraft, that can land right in the heart of cities.



Vertical Aerospace VX4 Image: Vertical Aerospace



VeloCity Image:Velocopter

In Europe, there are two main contenders to be the first into service with the German based Velocopter currently leading after their flights in Saudi Arabia.

Volocopter expects to get the European aerospace regulator, EASA, to clear its machine, the VoloCity to carry passengers in the next few months, so they can be ready for the Olympics. "Everything is ready and set to go for the middle of next year," according to **Christian Bauer**, the German company's chief financial officer.

Meanwhile, in UK, Vertical Aerospace is to give a public demonstration of its VX4 prototype within weeks. The Royal Aeronautical Society's Future of Flight conference at the end of September drew comment from several well informed observers.

Sir Stephen Hillier, chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), has predicted the "widespread adoption" of flying taxis, with the first commercial flight in an electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft at the Paris Olympics next year.

Professor Dame Helen Atkinson, pro-vice-chancellor of the school of aerospace, transport and manufacturing at Cranfield University in Bedfordshire, told delegates that they were "on the verge of a once-in-a-lifetime disruption of the transport sector", adding that she "was incredibly struck by the momentum around this, that imminence of actual delivery of operational eVTOL vehicles ... real operational infrastructure. Moving from demonstration towards reality."

Last year the world's first "vertiport" for air taxis, seen as a crucial step towards widespread use, was unveiled in Coventry. In the next few months a British company, Vertical Aerospace, will give the first public demonstration of a piloted prototype, with commercial operations set to start in 2026. It looks like UK will be ready to take advantage of these breakthrough aircraft so long as we can overcome some of the

problems we seem to struggle with – making infrastructure plans and seeing them through.

SOME WORRYING SIGNS

➤ **Offshore Windfarms.** Last month saw another auction for renewable energy projects. Usually these are a feeding frenzy but this year, the auction failed to secure the construction of any new offshore wind farms, with energy companies calling it a “wake-up call” ministers. As we reported in the August edition, all was not well as the price operators can charge has not altered in line with inflation. There are other incentives so the ownership of a windfarm is not as onerous as some would have us believe. However, the “fifth allocation round” published in early September revealed no offshore wind projects.

“This is a multi-billion pound lost opportunity to deliver low-cost energy for consumers and a wake-up call for government,” said Keith Anderson, chief executive of ScottishPower, one of the companies that had projects eligible to bid in the auction. My limited financial skills prevent me from understanding how increasing the charge rate to consumers is going to herald the low cost world promised by Mr Anderson.

A report in The Times claimed that the failure risked high energy bills. “The more renewables, the less gas you have to buy. By failing to back offshore wind, the government has added around £1 billion a year to energy bills in coming years,” according to Jess Ralston, energy analyst at the ECIU think-tank.

Of greater significance, the absence of these projects jeopardises the government’s goal of expanding offshore wind from 14GW of capacity now to 50GW by 2030, enough to power all UK homes. The target, crucial for meeting legally binding carbon targets, requires about 8GW of new projects to be built each year.

➤ **High Speed 2.** I know this is the political silly season but the furore over High Speed 2 (HS2) was unexpected and seems to be voter oriented rather than economically reasoned.

Regular readers will be all too familiar with the back story, of which the most recent headline was the claim by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority claim that the project is “unachievable”. The project was then awarded a red rating in its annual programme review (see the August report for details). More recently, the Chancellor of the Exchequer (the person who pays the bills) admitted that the cost of building HS2 is “getting totally out of control”.

Amid all this we have opposition politicians crowing about mis-management, Northern businesses and politicians of all hues demanding continuation at all costs and the Prime Minister, who caused the foment by delaying any comment when consulted. Amid all the hoo-ha, it is difficult to draw any project management related lessons, although it seems to me that we have a classic case of failed stakeholder

management. This in turn is partly due to a poorly articulated benefits management assessment and partly due to politicians fearful for their jobs.

Older UK readers may remember one of the approaches to project management – the so-called Magnus Magnusson method. Under this approach, the PM response to challenge was the cry “I’ve started so I’ll finish” (echoing the call by the host of the TV show Mastermind). This ensured continuance but not stakeholder satisfaction. In reality this recognised the sunk cost arguments but paid little attention to the potential benefits (which were outside our PM purview in those days).

In these modern times, there are macro issues to address and I’m not sure how well we, as PMs (as opposed to OILs), can intervene. There was an interesting op ed in the Times at the end of September that pointed to a National weakness: refusal to take responsibility in the face of unfairness. It pointed out that almost all major decisions involve unfairness to some group or other but to pander to these groups, who are often highly organised and vocal, effectively outsources decision making to the judiciary. This is a complex argument and I don’t intend to cover it here but we need to remember that the “do nothing” option does little good in these situations.

SOMETHING SPORTY

One project that took place outside UK but is still of interest because of the performance of its participants. I refer, of course, to what will become the famous opening match at the 2023 Asian Games match at Hangzhou, China where Nepal “demolished several T20I batting records during, including breaching 300 for the first time in the format” while playing Mongolia. In case you were wondering jkust where this event took place, see the map below.



Image: Vector Stock

This event marked the debut of Mongolia Men in international cricket. Their opening bowlers began well after their captain, **Luvsanzundui Erdenebulgan**, opted to bowl, restricting Nepal to 44-1 in five overs. Even at 95-2 after nine overs, there was little indication of what was to follow. But Kusal Malla then took 26 off **Buyantushig Terbish’s** first over, while bringing up his fifty off 19 balls. After that, Nepal rather ran away with the batting, setting numerous records. Full details can be found on Wisden’s site: <https://wisden.com>.

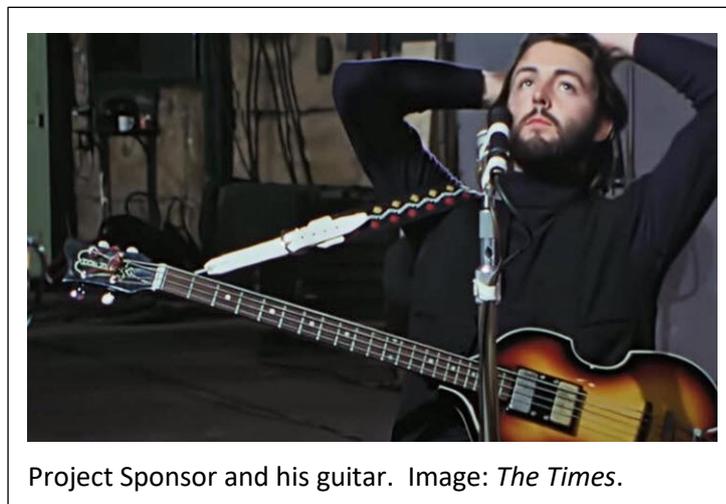
If you are wondering how this event came to take place, look no further than the 2028 Olympic Games. In February 2022, the IOC confirmed 28 "youth-focused" sports for inclusion at LA28 a list that includes skateboarding, sport climbing, surfing AND Cricket. This may explain why you have seen reports of the game spreading to far flung places such as the United States. However, I must admit I was surprised to learn that the game has been included at the Asian Games.

TRIVIAL PURSUITS

The Lost Bass Project, has launched! For those who don't keep up with major projects in the music industry, the project has a website but to save you some of your precious time, here is a brief heads up.

In 1961, **Sir Paul McCartney** bought a left-handed Höfner electric bass guitar for the princely sum of £30 in a Hamburg music store. According to the project sponsors, this became his "favourite" instrument. Musicologists claim it helped propel the Beatles to musical immortality.

Those who, like me, recall the distinctive and penetrating thud from early hits such as *Love Me Do* and *She Loves You*, remember it clearly. McCartney's love affair with the instrument meant he kept using it on tracks throughout the band's rise until it went missing just before they broke up in 1969.



Project Sponsor and his guitar. Image: *The Times*.

Nick Wass, Höfner's marketing manager and electric guitar developer for 12 years, is project manager, leading the search on behalf of McCartney, 81, who we presume is the Project Sponsor. So if you have a left-handed bass guitar with distinctive sunburst body, now is the time for you to come forward.

CLOSING REMARKS

➤ Habitat Boost

Despite a lot of doom and gloom on environmental matters, there is some good news. A large conservation project has been started by the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust (WWT) at Green Farm near Monkwood. They raised the money to buy the farm through donations and grants, including from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Dominique Cragg, of the trust, said it hoped to "turn the clock back" on the area by boosting habitats to preserve wildlife on its new 23-hectare site. The boundaries of Monkwood have not changed for about 300 years but woodland had been lost over time. "We did used to see an orchard on this land, we've lost a couple of hedges as well," she explained. "And way back in history, let's say 1,000 years ago, this would have once been woodland. "So we are turning the clock back and trying to put in all those features which are going to be so good for wildlife."

The trust aims to allow the natural regeneration of trees as well as plant some native species that have been lost over time.

➤ **£50 Million Project Success**

Now this is a serious note to close. In this modern age, we are all so time poor that we cannot afford to wait for anything. This is particularly true of the alphabet soup generations (X, Y and Z) and may contribute to a lack of appreciation of the finer but more time consuming beverages.

One of the biggest tea producers in UK has spent £50 million on creating a new blend, bag and fresh look for their tea, in a project that took two years to complete. Research revealed that 85 % of tea lovers leave the bag in for under a minute, with 45 % binning their teabag in under 30 seconds. This results in badly steeped tea.

Now PG Tips experts have brewed up a plan to save British tea drinkers from such a fate. They have designed a new teabag that features a square bag with room for the leaves to infuse and infuses in only 60 seconds.

This is a project of national significance. Readers will know that approximately 100 million teabags are consumed in UK so 650,000 cups are poorly brewed. For a nation that runs on tea, productivity is affected by poor tea so for a national cost of only 12,500 hours, we can restore the nation's tea quality and productivity. What a return on investment!

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.