

## UK Project Management Round Up<sup>1</sup>



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### INTRODUCTION

Most readers will know we were forced to skip the October issue, which is a mixed blessing as it allowed me more time to complete my report but still necessitates some editing as events in the PM World do not stand still.

There are times when you feel you are repeating yourself and this is one – the Silly Season is not actually over, as I had assured readers in the September report. I had forgotten that September brings not Wordsworth’s “the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness” but the party political conferences. A cynic might regard these events as just another junket for those with their snouts in the trough (See right). However, such events offer the opportunity for lobbying and the Politicos are



often prone to promise all sorts of goodies that affect the Project World as I report later. Furthermore, we have just had a new Budget set by the incoming Administration which will clearly affect the UK Project World.

So – what news have my various News Imps found over the last two months? Well, first up is a blast from what most of us considered the past – HS2 is in the news again. Then there is Our Esteemed Leader (OEL) who has announced plans for new Nuclear and as usual my Green Imp bears news of Off Shore energy developments. Trees are also in the project news these days.

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However, before descending to the news you have all been waiting for, I am returning to a rant I have raised several times recently.

## THE PROFESSION IN THE PUBLIC EYE

My Professional Services Imps have been putting in long hours recently. Imp # 1 tells me that here in UK, we are plagued by Public Inquiries. Any time anything goes wrong,



Image@ HM Government

there is a hue and cry from the GBP and hounds of the Fifth Estate (Great British Public and the Press, respectively) for a Public Inquiry – Lessons Must be Learned! It will come as no surprise that these events happen all too frequently and that they rarely produce any lessons, and in the unlikely event that they do, the Lessons Will NOT be learned. A large number of these unedifying spectacles are running currently and a few are of interest to Project people. We have the investigation into the events that culminated in the deaths of 72 people in the Grenfell Tower fire in London on 19 September 2017, and an independent public statutory Inquiry established to

gather a clear account of the implementation and failings of the Horizon IT system at the Post Office. There are others running but these two illustrate the point I want to make. But before I make this point, I would draw your attention to a US Coast Guard Board of Investigation looking at events leading up to the loss of the Titan submersible in June 2023.

The Titan Board of Investigation heard in September that the Engineering Director of OceanGate, the firm that built the doomed submersible, was fired for raising safety concerns some 4 years before the implosion that killed 5 people. **Tony Nissen** told the owner that the experimental capsule was “unfit”. He said “He wanted me to sign off on the idea of going to the Titanic and I was [saying] no, you can’t ... what we’re doing has never been done before ... We don’t know what ‘good’ is supposed to look like. But what I do know is it shouldn’t look like that. “I wouldn’t sign off on it, so I got terminated.”

So, what have these Inquiries have in common, I hear you ask? Grenfell has heard of project managers who reportedly knew their cladding projects were unsafe, yet they continued to use it and apparently raised no concerns. Similarly, failures in the Horizon IT project were ignored and criminal proceedings against sub-post office operators

pursued. In both cases, Project Managers were silent. The Titan investigation is different – someone formally raised a warning and was sacked for their troubles.

Project Management is an emerging profession but we face a major challenge. We are not yet strong enough to challenge unethical behaviour, nor do we have the credibility to be taken seriously when we raise important project threatening issues. There may be cases where PMs have risen to the challenge but I have yet to hear of them. Most PMs cannot afford to be “terminated” like Mr Nissen so it seems we may never rise to get ourselves into a position where our professional judgement is taken seriously and we can be counted amongst the true professions.

Imp#2 brings news of what scholars of profession term a jurisdiction dispute. One of the classic roles of a professional society is to defend its boundaries against encroachment by other occupations who can be seen to occupy territory they claim. We face just such a challenge in the project world where others try to claim our work as their own. You might think the traditional professions have moved well beyond such jurisdictional disputes but here in UK, we have the doctor’s Trade Union demanding an independent review into whether or not physician associates put patients at risk. Physician Associates assist Doctors but apparently do not have medical degrees. This seems unlikely to me as nurses are required to be degree qualified. I await the report of my Imp Professional on further developments!

## BLAST FROM THE PAST

Just when you thought it was safe to let the train take the strain again, news comes in about High Speed 2, and it comes in two flavours – good and not so good but much depends on your point of view. To recap, the current state of play is that HS2 will connect Birmingham with Old Oak Common in west London. A new 14-platform interchange with the new Elizabeth Line, Great Western main line and London Underground is being built. In the sketch (right) this is “uncertain” in that it leaves a significant gap between the HS2 terminal and central London.

➤ The “good news” is that the transport secretary, Louise Haigh, has, according to Press reports, effectively confirmed that the agreed section of HS2 between London and Birmingham would terminate at Euston rather than Old Oak Common.

Potential more good news comes with the idea that a cut back or “HS2-light” line



between Birmingham and Manchester could be built. Press reports claim Ministers are considering a proposal which they believe can be delivered much more cheaply than the original scheme, rather than to continue ex PM Rishi Sunak's decision to entirely scrap the high-speed line beyond Birmingham.

It would involve creating an additional section between Birmingham and Crewe that would allow trains to travel faster than the present West Coast mainline, although slower than HS2. Apparently this would be up to 40% cheaper to build than the previous HS2 link between the city and Manchester.

➤ The **“not so good news”** is the six years of severe disruption caused by HS2 work. This affects services between London and the southwest. Up to a third of weekend and overnight services leaving Paddington will be cut, affecting access to Heathrow as well as to south Wales, the Cotswolds and the west of England. This is on top of the extended Christmas closures between this year and 2030. It includes a closure of up to four weeks starting in December 2028.

Construction work at Old Oak Common will mean that only two tracks, compared with the usual four, will be when weekend and overnight work takes place, reducing the number of train “paths” from 48-56 an hour to 14-15. Line speeds will also be halved from 125mph, adding to journey times.

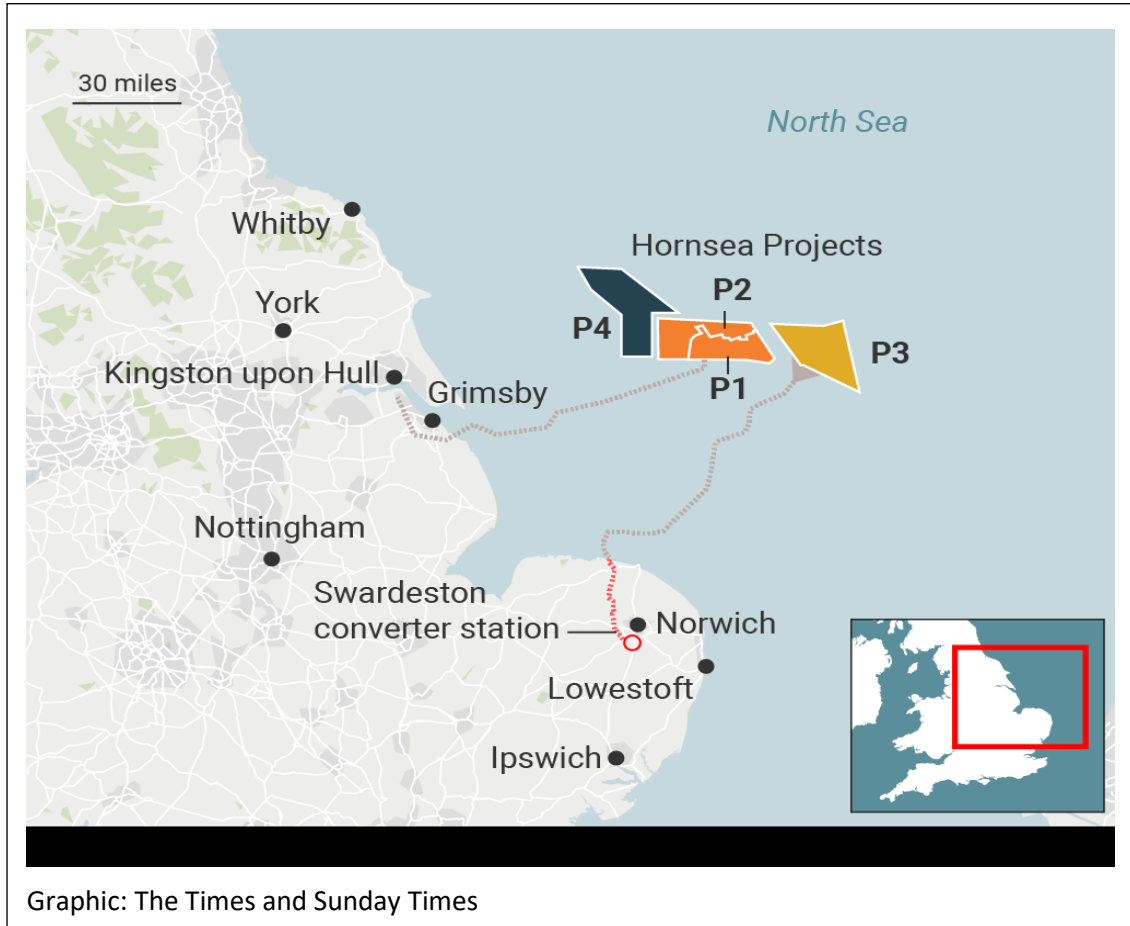
## **GOOD NEWS**

➤ **Green Energy Auction.** Readers may recall problems for the last Administration (seems hardly fair to call it Government) over the lack of bids for new renewable energy development licences. Well, its all change this year Labour's first auction elicited record number of bids leading to nine new offshore wind farms projects. The optimistic reader might think this rash of projects could deliver clean power to the equivalent of 11 million homes. This is the 6<sup>th</sup> in the series of annual auctions state subsidies and yielded 131 new green infrastructure projects. According to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero this is a record, and up from 92 in the previous auction, which included no wind farm bids at all. The wind farms include Hornsea 4 (see below and our August report for more on this programme). Spanish energy company Iberdrola also secured wins for its East Anglia Two and Three offshore wind developments

There is a sting in the tail as more than 20 onshore wind projects were agreed in the first auction since Labour ditched the de facto ban on the developments that had been in place since 2015. The number of solar projects agreed was also a record. Onshore wind farms and solar farms have attracted considerable opposition in recent times.

➤ **Hornsea Programme.** This programme, owned and developed by Danish company Orsted, is the world's largest offshore wind farm and comprises 4 offshore projects and series of onshore projects to link the generated power to the National Grid. The programme was under threat of closure last year as sharp increases in

financing costs, higher interest rates and inflation, plus shortages supply chain problems resulted in developers in major difficulty. As a result, the £8 billion wind farm project was threatened with termination.



“The three taken together meant that what was a fair business case at the time of bidding turned out to be not a fair business case at the end of 2023,” according to Duncan Clark, head of Orsted’s UK and Ireland operations.

Hornsea 3 is now nearing completion and projects to prepare the route for the second of four connection points that will transport power generated by the Hornsea 3 some 120km away from the converter station in Norfolk (see graphic above) in the North Sea, to the electricity grid. Work includes drilling a 950-metre-long horizontal path for the onshore cables to hook up to the offshore lines. The drill advances in nine metre sections, guided via a computerised system, until it punches out to the sea bed. It will take 12 weeks to complete the groundwork alone for the four links.

## NOT SO GOOD NEWS

➤ **Dogger Bank Wind Farms.** Not all is rosy in the offshore wind farm gardens as my aquatic Imp informs me that the Dogger Bank Wind Farms are delayed. Dogger Bank A, which together with its two sister wind farms will have a combined installed

capacity of 3.6 gigawatts, was due for completion during the six months to the end of September. However, owners SSE report that the first phase of the project the “A” development has been pushed back to the second half of next year. SSE has the largest renewable energy portfolio in Britain and Ireland. The Dogger Bank Programme is seeking to build one of the world’s largest wind farms at Dogger Bank, Seagreen, Scotland’s deepest offshore wind farm and one of Europe’s largest onshore wind farms at Viking.

➤ **Cannibalisation in Scotland.** No, people are not being consumed north of the border! My Scottish IMP has commented in previous months on the troubled construction of two ferries for CalMac, the ferry route operator. The Glen Sannox was supposed to be handed over on 14 October but sea trials have exposed an anchor problem and a fire alarm caused a total blackout of all systems. Now comes news that this ferry is being supplied with parts from its equally troubled sister ship. Some readers may recall that the two ships were scheduled to cost £97 million when the original contract was awarded in 2015. This has risen to £300 million and they will be at least six years late joining the national fleet. The latest issue concerns worn parts, including piping and cabling, which needs replacing and workers at the nationalised Ferguson shipyard in Inverclyde have taken components that had been used on the Glen Rosa.

➤ **Infrastructure Project Delays.** It seems that the new Administration is no better than its predecessor and is in fact rather worse. Figures show that four in ten nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIP) decisions have been delayed since Labour came to power, according to analysis by the Britain Remade campaign group. Under the Conservatives, the figure was 10 out of 26 — or 38 per cent — excluding projects delayed by the general election. NSIP are meant to go through a “fast-track” planning system for approval by ministers to avoid delay at a council level.

➤ **Puzzle Palace Refit.** Part of the mantra of the incoming regime was to “get Britain building” and backed that by fanciful plans to build large numbers of new houses. One minor matter that was not addressed was where is the work force to carry out these projects to be found? Now we learn that the multibillion-pound refurbishment of the Palace of Westminster could devour the declining stock of specialist craftworkers needed to meet the country’s net-zero commitments, Historic England has said. The public body said that the Westminster project would sweep up a third of heritage plasterers and window experts, require nearly 3,000 specialist workers each year and could last 43 years, costing more than £20 billion.

## PROFESSIONAL NEWS

**Association for Project Management.** (APM) The past two months have seen a great deal of activity on the professional front. As noted earlier, the Silly Season close out is marked by the annual gatherings of politicians in mostly seaside locations and as these people seem to have some influence over SNIPs and many other projects, both

locally and nationally, it is a good time to get some lobbying in. APM duly went to the Party – or at least the Party Conferences and did just that.

The UK Government has announced plans to merge the **Infrastructure and Projects Authority** (IPA) and the **National Infrastructure Commission** (NIC) into a single new infrastructure body, the **National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority** (NISTA). With new powers, NISTA is intended to drive better delivery of major projects and infrastructure across the UK. APM has produced an interesting briefing document (How to set NISTA up for success) on this development.

**New APM Vice Presidents.** APM have announced its new Vice Presidents, **Alistair Godbold** and **Antonio Nieto Rodriguez**. Taking over from Dr Paul Chapman, they will be tasked with key duties such as advocating for APM and hosting high-profile events including the APM awards.

**Alistair Godbold**, Hon Fellow APM FAPM ChPP, former Deputy Chairman of the Association for Project Management, will bring over 30 years of experience in the project profession to the role, most recently working as a Director with The Nichols Group. He is a director of the International Centre for Complex Project Management. He has also worked as a director of the Major Projects Association and authored several chapters of project management books and sections of the APM Body of Knowledge. Alistair is also a council member of the International Project Management Association, chairing their Advisory Committee and is an Honorary Fellow of the IPMA. Alistair is passionate about resolving the national and international shortage of skilled and experienced project professionals.



**Antonio Nieto Rodriguez** will bring significant experience and expertise to the role, having previously served a six-year term as a Board member and Global Chair of the Project Management Institute (PMI) in 2016. Along with his 25 years of experience as a project management practitioner, Antonio brings a unique understanding of how to tackle the main challenges currently facing the project profession, including the rise of new technology. Antonio is the creator of concepts such as the Project Economy, has



been included in the Thinkers50 list of most influential management thought leaders and is the most published author of project management articles in the Harvard

Business Review. Antonio is passionate about expanding APM's reach internationally to enhance its impact on developing the global project management community.

These appointments will support the work of the APM President, Dr **Yvonne Thompson CBE DL** in external influencing to support APM's long term development plans.

Development plans saw the transformation of APM's internal structure from Branches to Networks and Specific Interest Groups becoming Interest Networks. The latest Interest Network is:

**International Space Sector Interest Network.** According to their news site on APM's website, they want to create an international forum that brings together individuals from across the international space sector, sharing best practices, exchanging knowledge, facilitating discussions and events, and supporting capability building. Together, they will enhance the management and delivery of space projects and programmes.

## **CLOSING REMARKS**

### **Trees in Projects.**

As a regular visitor to the Lake District, I am all too well aware that it is not well covered by trees. In fact, apart from some large commercial stands of conifers, there are not many trees to offer shelter to the hiker or hardy sheep on these uplands.



Skiddaw Image: Joe Murphy/PA

An ambitious scheme has been launched by conservationists to transform these bare slopes into a rich mosaic of oak, birch, aspen, hazel, willow and many more native tree species, eventually colonised by black grouse, water voles and other species. If successful, it is expected to become England's highest forest.

According to Steve Trotter, chief executive of Cumbria Wildlife Trust "It's extremely unusual to have the opportunity to acquire a mountain in the Lakes". The group has raised £5 million from the insurer Aviva to buy Skiddaw Forest, a site of special scientific interest that, despite the name, is almost entirely treeless.



A further £1.25 million is needed to complete the purchase which will then be utilised to establish 300,000 trees across 650 acres on the mountain. High-elevation forests are a common sight in continental Europe but they are rare in the UK, and there is no substantial woodland above 400 metres in the Lakes, which is where the new Skiddaw treeline would start. Other parts of the Lake District have sessile Oak but these lie at lower elevations.

This is a very ambitious project that will entail raising additional funding, the acquisition of the 600,000 saplings estimated to be required to establish 300,000 trees. The high attrition is due in part to the wind and weather variations as well as the attention of sheep. Part of the risk mitigation includes reinstating the fence surrounding the planting area! Logistics may be challenging – and the use of drones is under investigation.

### **White Stork Project**

We lost our White Storks many generations ago but there is a project to reintroduce them to UK. We have a mixed record of reintroductions with by far the most successful being the Red Kite which is widely established in both England and Wales. There is also a population in Scotland but it is not as well established as the populations in the South.

Less success has been the Great Bustard project, based near me in Wiltshire. There have been several attempts to establish a breeding colony on Salisbury Plain but although there is a reasonably large number of birds, they are not fully established.

White Storks are very large birds and the project to establish a viable population has had some success. We have reported breeding successes at various English sites such as Knepp Park where some this year some 53 birds fledged from 90 eggs.

At Knepp, around 25 nonflying storks are housed in a secure, predator-proof enclosure. These storks, brought from Warsaw Zoo via Cotswold Wildlife Park in 2016, play a pivotal role in the project. They act as a magnet, attracting wild storks and forming the core of a growing colony. Almost all this year's brood and others have migrated to their wintering grounds in Morocco although some are loitering in Southern France.

Progress of this project can be followed on their website: <https://whitestorkproject.org/> and on Facebook.



Image: Avibirds

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## LOOKING AHEAD

Alert observers will have noted that there has been no mention of one of the most significant events of the autumn – The Budget! This event is too recent for reliable analysis so comment will be held over this next month.

Rewilding is flavour of the year so there will also be coverage of some of the more significant schemes to improve our natural environment so expect some news of beavers and buffalo contributions.

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## About the Author



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**Miles Shepherd, PhD** 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, Vice President 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 was Chairman of the British Standards Institute project management committee for more than 10 years and remains a committee member. 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).