

UK Project Management Round Up



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INTRODUCTION

Tis the season, not to be jolly, but to be overwhelmed by the annual political party circus. This year we have an extra one – what joy! However, there is one aspect of the political harangues to the faithful that is significant for the Project World, that is the potential for new projects (usually from the incumbent party) and criticism of Government projects by everyone else. This year is no different so we will need to cover prospects for new projects in defence, house building and the secret project. We can bypass some press reports covering nuclear waste as we reported on that last month which must have spurred activity in the UK press and other sectors.

There is also the visit of Trump to UK and the comet tail involved which will also impact the UK project world plus we have some successful projects, and some novel ideas on time management (lessons from multiple sources).

GOOD NEWS

➤ **Everton Football Stadium.**

This is a successful project brought to a conclusion by a large number of well-known project companies and forms part of a major regeneration scheme we reported on back in March. Everton Football Club or, as they are known to their fans, the Toffees, moved out of their home at Goodison Park to a new stadium. If you had to guess the name of this edifice, it probably wouldn't be Hill Dickinson Stadium. Located on Bramley-Moore Dock in Liverpool, it is part of Peel L&P's ambitious £5bn vision to completely transform the city's northern docks. Regular readers may recall our report on this major programme back in March.

The Liverpool Waters development will create a sustainable world-class, high-quality mixed-use waterfront consisting of apartments, offices, retail and leisure spaces alongside a new Isle of Man and Cruise Liner terminal that is intended to inject further

life into the city's historic docklands. There is much more about this on the Stadium website (<https://www.hilldickinsonstadium.com/>) including construction videos.



Image: Everton Football Club

The transformational development on the banks of the River Mersey will deliver one of the largest packages of public benefits the Liverpool City Region has ever seen. It will act as a catalyst for more than £650m of wider regeneration in North Liverpool - including Liverpool Waters and the Ten Streets Developments.

➤ **Stirling Prize short list**

RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) has announced the short list for the 2025 Stirling. These are:

Elizabeth Tower by Purcell – known to some as Big Ben, this is hailed as a conservation masterpiece, it is the most comprehensive restoration of Elizabeth Tower in 160 years. Traditional materials and bespoke craftspeople were sourced from across the UK to honour the Tower's original design, rectifying previous restoration missteps and repairing newly uncovered damage from the Second World War.

The Discovery Centre (DISC) by Herzog and de Meuron / BDP. AstraZeneca's civic laboratory radically redefines the research facility, blending cutting-edge laboratories with welcoming public spaces. The surprisingly low-rise, sawtooth-roofed building adopts a curved triangular plan, forming an inviting interface for Cambridge's Biomedical Cluster.

Appleby Blue Almshouse by Witherford Watson Mann Architects. Described as a pioneering model providing housing for later living, **it** replaces an abandoned care

home, The design radically reimagines the traditional almshouse to foster community and reduce isolation among residents. The layout flips a centuries-old typology, placing communal spaces at its heart to encourage interaction, while bay windows at street level connect residents to the outside world.

London College of Fashion by Allies and Morrison. Located in the cultural heart of the Queen Elizabeth Park in Stratford, it is a vertical campus for creativity. The new home for the London College of Fashion brings together its 6,000 staff and students for the first time. The constrained site prompted 17 storeys vertical with dramatic staircases unfurling through a shared “heart space” to encourage collaboration.

Niwa House by Takero Shimazaki Architects. Meaning “Garden Home” in Japanese, Niwa House is a pavilion-like oasis built on a previously derelict South London plot and is seen as a blueprint for accessible housing. Sprawling across and downwards to navigate planning constraints, this “horizontal home” is a masterclass in craftsmanship and restraint.

Hastings House by Hugh Strange Architects. Instead of demolishing an ageing hillside home, Hastings House reuses and celebrates the existing structure and materials to create a house of contrasts. A restrained, updated Victorian front gives way to a modern, timber framed rear, while a rough concrete courtyard celebrates its industrial character.

These extracts are from the RIBA website where a fascinating range of photographs showcases some spectacular projects.

➤ **New defence prospects.**

The Government announced increases in defence spending, without much idea where the money will be spent. However, we learn that the Ministry of Defence wants to increase spending on research and development. A sign of the times is that MoD seems to be following the US idea of making sure small and medium enterprises (SMEs) get a bite of the cake. MoD plans to establish an office of small business growth, and by 2028 it wants to increase its spending on SMEs by £2.5 billion.

Press reports from the Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI), the biennial arms fair held in London, are pointing towards new procurement strategies including one described by *The Times* as an intriguing idea is a move towards an “offset policy” when buying gear from foreign companies. In effect, Britain would demand more benefits, such as new jobs and novel technologies at home, when it selects an overseas supplier. Where have we heard this before?

➤ **SMR contracts**

As part of the fallout from the Trump visit, the government has increased access to the market for both UK and US companies with new major commercial deals. The

announcement claims this is building on existing UK and US collaboration including between Rolls-Royce and BWXT, and includes deals between other firms:

- **X-Energy and Centrica** - plans to build up to 12 advanced modular reactors in Hartlepool, with a follow-on UK wide programme targeting a fleet of 6GW of nuclear power. According to the companies, the Hartlepool project would generate enough power for up to 1.5 million homes and create up to 2,500 good jobs. The companies estimate the overall programme could deliver at least £40 billion in economic value, with £12 billion in value focussed for the North East of England.
- **Holtec, EDF and Tritax** - plans to develop advanced data centres powered by small modular reactors at the former Cottam coal-fired power station in Nottinghamshire. Holtec estimate the project value to be around £11 billion, and it is expected to create thousands of high-skilled construction jobs, as well as long-term roles in operations for the local community.
- **Last Energy and DP World** – plans to establish one of the world’s first micro modular nuclear power plants, backed by £80 million in private investment, to unlock a clean power supply for the expansion of DP World’s London Gateway port and business park.
- **Urenco and Radiant** – signs a deal, worth around £4 million, to supply advanced HALEU fuel to the US market. Urenco is building an Advanced Fuels Facility in the UK co-funded with the UK Government and is exploring building a similar facility in the US.
- **TerraPower and KBR** – plans to conduct studies and evaluate sites in the UK for the deployment of the Sodium advanced reactor technology, with each Sodium reactor supporting around 1,600 construction jobs and 250 permanent jobs and delivering safe, reliable and flexible nuclear power paired with gigawatt-scale energy storage.

It is difficult to see how this fits into Rolls Royce’s strategy to become the prime SMR supplier in the world. Under the deal, both countries will fast-track reactor design checks, meaning if a reactor has already passed rigorous safety checks in one country, this work can be used by the other to support its assessment, avoiding duplicating work. This seems to abandon any advantage UK has with its advanced SMR design approvals. However, the government view is that this approach will help speed up approvals for nuclear, to around 24 months, for advanced designs like the Rolls-Royce SMR, boosting British exports and getting Britain building. It comes as Rolls-Royce announces it has entered the US regulatory process for its SMR.

➤ **Cornish Mining**

The prospects for renewed mining in the West Country are looking good as we learn that after extensive additional drilling, sampling, testing and modeling over the last 12 months“, Cornish Lithium has upgraded its output estimates from their Trelavour Hard Rock Project looks to be 50% higher than previously estimated. As we reported in the April issue, the firm received planning permission for its Trelavour Lithium Project which proposes to repurpose the former china clay pits for the extraction, processing and refining of lithium in Trelavour Downs, St Dennis. At the end of September, they received £35m of equity funding secured with up to £31m from the National Wealth Fund (NWF) and £4m from TechMet.

Cornish Lithium Plc also have their Cross Lanes Geothermal Lithium Project which uses direct lithium extraction (DLE) technology to recover lithium from geothermal waters and then return the water underground.



Old Cornish mines

Image: ©National Trust Images / David Noton

Funding will progress the Trelavour Lithium Project towards a construction decision and the Cross Lanes Geothermal Lithium Project to commercial drilling, advancing the business to the next stage of development. Cross Lanes is split into two phases; phase one is the drilling and testing of two 2000m deep geothermal wells to extract lithium-enriched brine, while the second will see the operation of a demonstration plant to validate lithium production. This new round of funding will allow Cornish Lithium to proceed to commercial drilling.

NOT SO GOOD NEWS

➤ **Tripple Whammy**

It has been a bad month for the life sciences in UK. First, we have a key report on the status of this important project-based industry and then we learn of two key players stopping major investment projects in UK. To compound this, some UK firms have succumbed to pressure to transfer plants to the USA. A highly critical report from the Association of the British Pharmaceutical based on research conducted with PwC, claims UK is “losing the race” to attract global investment into its key life sciences and pharmaceutical sectors due to an uncompetitive operating environment.



Evidence comes hard on the heels of Astra Zeneca 's January decision to scrap plans for a £450 million investment in its vaccines site in Speke, Liverpool, followed by a paused in its planned £200 million investment in its Cambridge research site. This latest blow to the government's life sciences strategy. means two significant funding

commitments by AstraZeneca that had been announced in the budget in March last year, are not currently going ahead. The Cambridge investment, was expected to create 1,000 jobs,

Now giant US drugs group Merck has abandoned its £1 billion investment in a new London research centre. Merck plans to scrap the 25,000 sq. ft headquarters it was developing in the Knowledge Quarter near King's Cross. The building was already under construction following an announcement two years ago and was expected to open in 2027.

Eli Lilly has also recently “paused” part of a planned investment in a Lilly Gateway Labs biotech innovation accelerator hub in London while it waits “for more clarity on the UK environment”.

➤ **UK Warship to be built in Spain**

Our naval history with Spain is dominated by the Armada in the 16th Century so it comes a blow to discover that the first of three ships being built for the Royal Navy will take place in Spain.



The original £1.6 billion contract for the ships, three Fleet Solid Support ships (FSS) was awarded to Team Resolute comprising BMT, Harland & Wolff and Navantia UK. The contract was expected to create 1,200 UK shipyard jobs, hundreds of graduate and apprentice opportunities, and an expected 800 further jobs across the UK supply chain. to manufacture the vessels providing

munitions, stores and provisions to Royal Navy ships. Originally the midsection of the first ship was to be built in Belfast, but that has now moved to Cádiz in Spain

The original plans called for the ship's midsection to be built at H&W's Belfast yard, the bow constructed at H&W's Appledore facility in Devon and other sections in Spain, before final assembly in Belfast. Under the revised plan, the bow will be built in Devon, while the midsection and the remainder of the first ship will now be constructed in Cádiz. The change of plan is, apparently due to difficulties at the Belfast yard of Harland & Wolff.

➤ **Space Lab project abandoned by UK**

Another project to lose its funding under the government spending review ss Truths — Traceable Radiometry Underpinning Terrestrial and Helio Studies. Developed by the National Physical Laboratory, Britain's national metrology institute, the project was intended to collect measurements of energy coming to Earth from the sun to provide more accurate readings of climate change.

Described as “a gold standard of calibration for space-based Earth observation”, the decision came as a surprise to overseas collaborators. Airbus and other 25 companies were involved, including Luton-based Telespazio UK and the UK arm of Spanish tech business GMV.

The European Space Agency said the UK had notified the agency of its intention to discontinue funding “due to affordability constraints related to a spending review”. It said that as “the UK is the largest funder and proponent of the mission, this decision will very likely lead to cancellation of the programme”.

OTHER PROJECT NEWS

➤ **Ellison Institute**

This could also be part of the Not so Good News as press reports claim that the much-vaunted research institute announced by **Larry Ellison** two years ago, seems to in trouble as its president, **Professor Sir John Bell**, has left amid claims of a clash at the top.



The Ellison Institute of Technology (pictured left) aims to solve some of humanity's most "challenging and enduring problems", spanning health, food security and climate change. To do this, it has hired, and fired, many leading scientists and researchers as well as entering into a "long-term strategic alliance" with the University of Oxford. Ellison has launched a scholars programme; invested

more than £200 million last year in subsidiaries, including special purpose vehicles; and, in a scientific coup, poached **Professor Jason Chin** from Cambridge to become the founding director of its Generative Biology Institute.

According to press reports, there has been a "toxic" culture, a "cavalier attitude" of hiring and quickly letting staff go; operational frustrations from scientists over "cumbersome" HR processes and building and lab space delays; and bullying allegations. However, The Times reported an insider who said: "This change in direction is fine, but we should be honest that actually we are now becoming much more like a research institute focusing on some very big science ideas that will have differential time frames."

➤ **The Secret Project**

Regular readers may recall news of Operation Kelp, the so-called secret project concealed by the current Prime Minister. This turned out to be a new version of a project proposed by OIL (our illustrious leader) Boris with a few egalitarian tweaks to benefit the hard-working British family. This was the big reveal at that Labour Party conference and is none other than a digital ID.

The Press had a field day, starting at the beginning of the month when speculation claimed that everyone in the UK will be forced to have a digital ID, and continuing right up to the actual announcement, letters to Editors, reports from every conceivable specialist correspondent decried the plot against humanity. No one spoke to the man on the top of the Clapham Omnibus.

Operation Kelp will solve immigration problems at a stroke, accelerate financial growth and preserve traditional British values. I see the Swiss have just approved a similar scheme so I wonder how it will work out here.

CLOSING REMARKS

➤ Harrier problems



Image: (© Dean Eades)

imported from Spain and France, in the hope that they would breed in captivity and their offspring be released into the wild. The birds did not breed successfully in the 2023, 2024 and 2025 seasons, however, the first three years of an intended five. Although the project has been controversial. The RSPB had always had “serious reservations” as the group felt reintroductions should not take place before solving the issue of why a species is threatened in the first place. In project management terms, it is hard to see any other course but to pull the plug.

Hen Harrier project problems to be precise. Regular readers may recall news in April that “Britain’s most successful conservation project of this century”, which helped to boost hen harriers from four breeding pairs in 2016 to 50 pairs in 2023 on northern moorlands, was refused funding by Natural England. Now comes news of another hen harrier project curtailment, this time in southern England. Birds have been

➤ Time management

In a sign of the times, I was reflecting that Christmas seems to be launched commercially earlier every year. What prompted my nostalgic reverie was the advent on one of the higher numbered TV channels of their Christmas RomCom series at the beginning of September. Then came the time management of President Maduro in Venezuela. For the second year running, he has brought Christmas forward to the beginning of October. He declared “Once again this year Christmas starts on October 1 with joy, commerce, activity, culture, - carols”.



I think there must be something in this time shifting that we Project Managers could use to our benefit.

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 35 years' experience on a variety of projects in UK, Eastern Europe, Russia and the Far East. 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 Hon 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 past Chair of the ISO committee developing new international standards for Project Management and for Program/Portfolio Management. He has also served more than 20 years on the British Standards Institute project management committee including 7 years as Chairman. He was involved in setting up APM's team developing guidelines for project management oversight and governance.

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