

UK Project Management Round Up¹



By Dr Miles Shepherd

*Executive Advisor & International Correspondent
Salisbury, England, UK*

INTRODUCTION

Now the nights are drawing in and the weather cools, we put the Silly Season behind us, although the meteorologists are threatening us with another mini heatwave. Us project people will prepare for the worst and hope for the best, as usual. This month there is cause for cautious optimism as a long standing “issue” seems to have been resolved, there is no news about High Speed 2 and a major regeneration project moves into its final phase. Just as every silver lining has a cloud, I will get our cloud out of the way first so we can wallow in the better news later.

NOT SO GOOD NEWS

Flying Problems. Long term readers may recall that in July 2015, the independent airports commission issued its report on the feasibility of constructing a third runway at London’s Heathrow Airport. The review took three years and covered, in exhausting detail, all possible options to expand UK aircraft capacity. Chaired by **Sir Howard Davies**, with such august project people as Sir John Armitt, lately of the London Olympic Authority, the report came down in favour of the business case and the engineering proposal. Since then, the proposal has been challenged at every turn, starting with a claim the business case was flawed, legal challenge at every level up to and including the Supreme Court.

Last year, as we reported, the Government again examined the programme and came to the same conclusions endorse by Parliament in 2018. We are, however, no further forward and there is concern that the new Prime Minister will prefer some more “Manchester Solution”. One of the original Commissioners, **Sir John Armitt** has made a forceful case for implementing what he calls the National Project. He dismissed the

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notion that funding Britain's hub airport, costed at £30 billion+ is unaffordable as it will be fully privately financed. He also supported the UK position on climate change. His major point is that the aviation industry is already transitioning to less polluting fuel and the progress of carbon capture needs to be factored into the argument. He highlights that Heathrow is UK's only hub airport and, measured by the value of goods passing through it, the UK's largest port. Arguments will no doubt rumble on and I doubt that I will live to see the third Heathrow runway.

Biogas Turmoil. The production of biogas solves some waste management problems as it consumes animal manure, food and kitchen waste, sludge from waste water treatment and agricultural residue, turning in into biogas and leftover solid and liquid material called digestate which is rich in nutrients and used as a natural agricultural fertilizer. All good, so you would think but the residents of a part of Buckinghamshire object, saying that the plant will in bring an estimated 30,000 HGV trips through nine villages thus creating pollution, damage the environment and risk road safety.



Artists impression of the plant. (Image: *The Times*)

Objectors and the local Member of Parliament claim “Acorn Bioenergy has failed to consider more sustainable alternative sites within the catchment area. Such a huge increase in HGV movements through these small villages would have a devastating environmental and safety impact.” It is not clear how the vehicle estimates have been

compiled but the plans has been approved after an exhaustive 4 year process. Given the significant issues farmers face as a result of the US war in Iran, it seems perverse to object to a product that will help food production and deal with waste that otherwise would have to be managed at taxpayer expense.

GOOD NEWS

Red Tape Removal. We have reported many times on the problems faced by the construction industry. In many areas, housebuilding has been effectively banned in parts of the country because of concerns over nutrients from wastewater damaging local ecosystems. To unblock the system, and no doubt remove one of the many reasons why the threatened 1.5 million new homes promised by the current Government are unlikely to be built, Ministers have launched a new scheme. This will allow developers to pay a one-off “nature recovery” charge to get fast-track planning approval. Payment of a flat fee of about £2,000 per property to offset environmental damage caused by their new homes is intended to open up the planning system.



Image: Wikipedia

The money “acquired” will be combined into a central pot to enable conservationists to make large scale improvements to the environment. Currently, developers are required to pay for piecemeal local schemes. The first of such schemes is planned for Norfolk where Ministers claim it will allow almost 16,000 homes to be built while providing about £30 million to restore the waterways “at scale”. Some may feel it to be rather naive to think this will have any impact on local planning authorities as they will lose control of local developments and new amenities funded by others. The results will be awaited with considerable interest.

DISC World Solution.



Image: AstraZeneca

AstraZeneca expected to pay around £330 million for its Discovery Centre (DISC) which was scheduled to open in 2016. Located in Cambridge, the building, designed by Herzog & de Meuron in collaboration with BDP, eventually opened in November 2021 but significant remedial work was needed

before the project was finally complete in May 2023. AstraZeneca sought to recover more than £31.7 million. The claim was disputed and Court action was scheduled for 2027. However, Court papers release recently indicate that agreement has been reached and the action stayed.

The DISC can house around 2,350 research scientists, includes 16 laboratories, an auditorium and a college-style grass quad. The “sawtooth” roof design is intended to minimise energy use. The completion of this project has been welcomed as a vote of confidence in the British life sciences sector and represented a reversal of policy after the firm had suspended the expansion of the site in September 2025 and abandoning development of a £450 million vaccine manufacturing plant in Speke, Liverpool. However you look at it, this is a major milestone for all concerned.

Western Film Powerhouse. No, this is nothing to do with making cowboy films. Rather, it is the aspiration of the city of Bristol which has just begun a £12 million expansion of *Bottle Yard Studios*. My thespian Imp informs me that the dosh has come from the snappily titled West of England Mayoral Combined Authority. They are clearly onto something as their support has helped the Studio win 115 projects since its 11th stage opened five years ago, according to an independent report. Bristol as a city has recently hosted Disney’s *Rivals*, *Agatha Christie’s Seven Dials* and the Saoirse Ronan film *Bad Apples*. Building on these achievements, the combined authority is expected to announce a multimillion-pound production fund to attract more productions to the southwest.

Leader of Bristol city council, **Tony Dyer**, said the Bottle Yard has become a success story for the Southwest.

“The benefits extend far beyond the studio gates. Local suppliers, freelancers, accommodation providers, specialist businesses and production crews all benefit when filming comes to Bristol,” he said. “Local businesses have seen increased demand and growth as a result of the studios’ success, while crews report greater employment stability and more opportunities to build careers without leaving the region.”

Regeneration in London. As we have reported over the past 5 years, the iconic Battersea Power Station has been the focus of a major regeneration scheme in the heart of London. The “project” began at about the same time this Journal was first published and has progressed to a master plan originally devised by the architect **Rafael Viñoly**. About 2,200 flats, more than 170 shops, restaurants and bars and 800,000 sq. ft of office space, mainly leased by Apple, have been built in the power station itself and the surrounding area.

The plan has been updated by **Studio Egret West** reworking the original masterplan as the final phase begins. Developers Battersea Power Station Development

Company have employed a denser design concept for the last 16 acres of undeveloped land.



Battersea Power Station showing proposed final phase. (Image: Battersea Power Station Development Co)

The new approach will double the scale of development that has taken place. The planning application has been submitted to Wandsworth and responds to changing expectations around how people live, work and spend their leisure time, while placing greater emphasis on connectivity, public realm and creating a finer-grained urban neighbourhood around the Grade II* listed power station.

OTHER PROJECT NEWS

Recycling the Wind. A major breakthrough has enabled one of the earliest windfarm in Britain to be fully recycled and reused. An external review of the decommissioning of Hagshaw Hill wind farm showed that less than 0.1 per cent had been sent to landfill. Historically, it has been challenging to recycle old windfarm blades but Plaswire, based in Northern Ireland, has pioneered ways of recycling a wide array of waste plastics, now including old wind turbine blades. This is a major step towards developing a fully circular alternative energy supply.

According to CEO **Andrew Billingsley**, Plaswire is preparing to develop a second recycling facility in Scotland that could create dozens of new jobs, in anticipation of handling increasing volumes of blades as old wind farms come to the end of their life. “We need a lot of investment — we have to grow fast,” he said.

Maritime Nuclear Power Designs. A British start-up designing floating nuclear power stations has signed a public-private agreement. **Core Power**, based in Chiswick Park, London, has signed a first-of-its-kind agreement with the US Maritime Administration to accelerate construction of a US-flagged fleet of rapid nuclear-powered merchant vessels. One of the benefits of this is the impact it could have on the US shipbuilding industry that has been decimated by cheaper competitors from China in recent years. This would be quite an achievement, especially when it is remembered that the US Navy has a number of nuclear powered surface warships.

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETY NEWS

Travelling Networks. The Association for Project Management (APM) has launched its latest Network – this time in Australia. The APM Victoria Network held its first event at **EnergyAustralia**, bringing together project professionals from different sectors, organisations and career stages to discuss leadership, project decision-making and the future of the profession. The event gave attendees the opportunity to hear from industry leaders, connect with peers and help shape the future of the emerging APM Victoria community. This latest Network joins overseas counterparts in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Republic of Ireland and the United Arab Emirates.

PMI UK. The group had two events last month, a webinar on AI covering data governance and ethical data use and Toastmasters Club. I'm not entirely sure I understand what the toastmasters do but given the number of events they offer, it sounds interesting. I see the popular PM at the BBC is being offered in South Wales next month which should be interesting!

CLOSING REMARKS

This has been quite a year for activities in the natural world and my indefatigable Imps bring yet more news.

Breaks for Freedom? Readers will be intrigued to learn that Stanley the armadillo has joined the ranks of escapees from British Zoos. First, we had two newly transferred Capybaras making a break from Marwell Zoo in Hampshire. Tango stayed close to home and was quickly returned but Samba remains at large, despite several sightings. Now it is the turn of Stanley, a six-banded Armadillo to make a run for it. Stanley lived at Animal Magic, a firm that organises school visits and the like. Co-owner Chris Coetzer that Stanley had "managed to force a door open" to escape an enclosure. On a previous occasion when "he escaped at a party, I had to chase him, and I had to run quite fast to catch him," he said.

Pests Controlled. The connection between the target of this snippet and projects is limited to the name given to the activities by the participants. The main participant is a foreign invader, in these inclusive times, this homicidal pest is known as the Yellow Legged hornet – formerly known as the Asian Hornet. My entomological Imp tells me the beast was renamed two years ago because so many people were mistaking it for its more innocuous European cousin, which has dark red legs. Make no mistake, this is a killer – it is huge and devours honeybees for breakfast lunch and tea. First identified in UK in 2016, the invasion seems to have come from France, according to Government sources.



13 – Lucky for Some. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) has announced the fledging of 13 hen harrier chicks at their Geltside reserve in Cumbria.



The hen harrier is a Red List bird. In conservation terms that means the species has declined by more than 50% in the last 25 years, or longer, is globally threatened or are not recovering from historical decline and in UK has had its breeding range in the UK reduced drastically by at least 50% in the last 25 years or longer. Hence the excitement!

Before you wonder about a super breeder, let me tell you these came from 3 nests which is still pretty remarkable.

Human Rights Alert. Loyal readers will be reassured that the rights of trees are being protected. The great metropolis of Lewes, in darkest Sussex, has approved a motion a motion granting several rights to trees, including the right to life, to flourish, to be restored and to complete natural life cycles. According to a BBC Report, the motion, created by a number of groups working together since May, guided by a toolkit developed by Dr Joanna Miller Smallwood, leader of the Environmental Justice Law Clinic at the University of Sussex. This is a surprising move as local councillors are renown for looking after their own interests. It is also well known that trees do not vote.

A Rose by Any Other Name. And finally, I bring you another case of confused identity. Readers of the UK Press will know that we are blessed with a worrying level of young (under 25) people not in education, employment or training. There are known in the meejah as NEETs. Previously, this expanding section of Gen Z were known as

NEWTs, not in education, work or training. It looks like work is a dirty word and has been deleted. Shades of trigger warning?

About the Author



Dr Miles Shepherd

Salisbury, UK



Dr. 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.

Miles is based in Salisbury, England and can be contacted at miles.shepherd@msp-ltd.co.uk.