

UK Project Management Round Up¹



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INTRODUCTION

When I looked back at the month, it seemed there would be little to pass on to readers, but closer scrutiny has shown more stories than at first seemed probable. So coverage of some news will be brief and other items of interest will be held over till next month.

GOOD NEWS

The year has started quite well with the welcome news that the **M27 Underpass** at Junction 10 was successfully completed with the concrete tunnel maneuvered into place and the motorway re-opened on schedule. There is more to do on this £100 million project which is scheduled for completion in the winter of this year.

Rolls-Royce SMR has announced a contract with **Skanska UK** to deliver an aseismic bearing pedestal demonstrator for its **Small Modular Reactor (SMR)**.

These structural isolation devices are a key part of the factory-built nuclear power plant's design and play a critical role in decoupling buildings and infrastructure from ground motion during seismic events - significantly enhancing safety and resilience.

The project will be delivered from Skanska's fabrications facility in Doncaster, England, and includes building a prototype of the aseismic bearing pedestal which allows standardisation of the Rolls-Royce SMR design across a diverse range of geotechnical and seismic conditions.

Hothouse Projects. Kew Gardens is world famous for its plant collections and spectacular glass houses whose renovation we have reported over the years. The latest project at the west London park concerns the Palm House and the Waterlily House which are showing signs of serious deterioration and are not energy efficient.

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The world heritage site was granted planning permission in February, having received approval from UNESCO and Historic England to update the listed early Victorian structures. Work on the Waterlily House is set to begin in spring while the full project looks to secure funding to meet the expected £60 million overall cost.

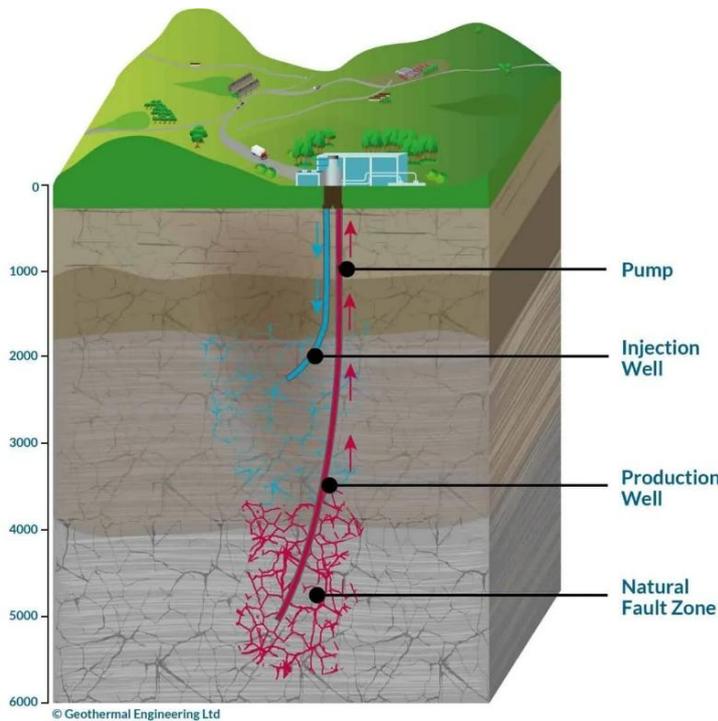


Image :Royal Botanical Gardens via BBC Palm House showing original layout

Since the Palm House opened in 1848, the building has undergone regular restorations due to the impact of high humidity and poor ventilation on the structure. This ambitious renovation aims to transform the buildings into the first net zero heritage buildings of their kind. The head of glasshouse collections, Tom Pickering remarked: "Those buildings have always been buildings that are pushing the boundaries in terms of engineering. So it's nice to think that these projects are still pushing boundaries with technology".

Hot Rocks. Readers may recall earlier progress reports on thermal energy projects in Cornwall. The principle is relatively straightforward and follows examples in Iceland and elsewhere. Now we can report that the first operational thermal energy plant in UK has been switched on. It has taken nearly 20 years to build and required engineers to drill three miles into the ground – the deepest well ever excavated in the UK.

The British Geological Survey said it was a "major step forward" for geothermal but the high costs could make it hard to build more plants like this one in other places.



The plant is owned and operated by Geothermal Engineering Ltd's (GEL). Its United Downs power plant is located near the Cornish city of Truro but, according to **Project InnerSpace**, there are other locations in UK, notably on National Health Service sites near Belfast, Birmingham Liverpool, and Manchester offer possibilities.

Another Boring Story. This must be a record as this is the second consecutive month with a good news report from High Speed 2 (HS2)! This time, it is

the Chilterns Tunnel that attracts attention as it comes in 12 days ahead of schedule. To remind you, the twin-bore tunnels (one for each direction tunnel runs for between West Hyde in Hertfordshire and South Heath in Buckinghamshire. The tunnelling took 33 months to excavate, finishing in early 2024, using two 2,000-tonne Tunnel Boring Machines that removed 3 million cubic meters of chalk.

Instead of transporting excavated material by road, it was reused on-site for landscaping. The tunnel includes 5 ventilation shafts with headhouses designed to resemble local agricultural buildings. There are 38 cross-passages connecting the two tunnels for emergency evacuation and the build required 112,000 concrete segments to line the bores, manufactured on-site. All this will allow trains will travel at speeds up to 200 mph (320 km/h).

Sizewell Runs On. It is always hard to find positive news in the Fourth Estate so the report that the UK's most productive nuclear reactor could, with the proper maintenance, have its working life extended by 20 years beyond its planned 2035 closure is welcome. Such an extension would provide 30 years of jobs for Suffolk's nuclear workforce, with apprenticeships continuing



throughout the period. It would also reinforce Suffolk's potential to operate three reactors simultaneously by the 2030s, supporting regional ambitions to become the UK's premier nuclear hub.

As always, extending lifespans comes at a cost – in this case, some £800 million spread over 10-15 years, with work mostly carried out during the power station's planned 18-month outage cycles. However, the extension is conditional on securing a government-backed energy contract (called a Contract for Difference). EDF runs UK's fleet of nuclear and has reported that investment in all its plants for 2026 – 28 will come to £1.2 billion which will "help boost reliability and output". Sizewell B is the last Pressurised Water Reactor (PWR) in UK. It had a strong year in 2025, operating for 99% of the time and delivering the second highest output in its 30-year history

NOT SO GOOD NEWS

More Nuclear Money. EDF (remember them from the Good News) have released their financial statement for 2025 which brings news of the price of Hinkley C and other cheery topics. First the bad news – Unit 1 at Hinkley Point C will not come online until 2030 or, worst case 2031. Next the really bad news, project costs look like rising to £35bn (in 2015 prices), nearly double the estimate given when the nuclear power plant was given the go ahead.

If the now estimated 2030 date is met for Unit 1 it will mean the project has taken 13 years from beginning of construction to first power. This is about the same as other reactors such as Sizewell C but a further 12-month delay, the worst-case scenario, would generate an estimated additional cost of around £1bn in 2015 prices, the French energy group also said.

Ill Winds Blow. In February 2026, the UK government approved a major renewable energy expansion that included 157 new solar farms, along with significant wind energy developments the 2026 [Contracts for Difference \(CfD\) Allocation Round 7 \(AR7\)](#) flogged off – er – secured a record-breaking 14.7 GW of new, low-cost renewable energy capacity across 201 projects, including 8.4 GW of offshore wind and 6.2 GW of solar, onshore wind, and tidal power. All good news for some, you say, but all is not rosy as reported last month as several major projects are not expected to open in time to help meet the Government's 2030 target and several are for highly speculative projects that have yet to receive planning permission or secure their supply chain.

The government awarded contracts include 157 solar developments across England, Scotland and Wales. In several reports, local communities oppose such large developments on their doorstep. As an example, The West Burton solar farm planned for the Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire border has become the largest ever to win a government contract, but local opponents fear it could cause "mass industrialisation" of the countryside as it takes up 788 hectares of land across three sites.

Not the End of the Line. Liverpool Street Station is the London terminus for a number of important rail lines that connect Cambridge; and commuter trains serving east London and destinations in the East of England, including the Stansted Express service to Stansted Airport. Opened in 1874, the station was built as for dual-level operation, with provision for the London Underground. New platforms were added in 2022 as part of the Crossrail project. With 94.5 million passengers between April 2023 and March 2024, it was the busiest station in the United Kingdom, according to the Office of Rail and Road.

So it is an important component of the transport system of the Capital. It has also just had a massive expansion plan approved so you might be forgiven why it is in the Not Good section. As with all major UK projects, it has attracted massive opposition so win or lose, it is bound to upset some sector of the population.

The proposals have broken records for the level of public reaction received, amassing the highest ever numbers of both objections and letters of support for an application in the City of London. More than 3,730 objections were made, and 1,152 people expressed support.

The now approved redevelopment scheme focuses on heritage preservation and improved accessibility, introducing fresh office and retail spaces alongside sustainable, pedestrian-friendly landscaping. The station's usage has climbed 41 % above its pre-pandemic peak, signalling a major shift in London's commuter patterns and a robust recovery for the City's economy.

More Controversial Project News. There is lots of it and space precludes sharing much of it with you this time but rest assured, it won't be forgotten and a new section will be added to your UK Report starting next month to record one or two such items.

OTHER PROJECT NEWS

Professional Society News.

Major Collaboration. My International Imp reports that the International Centre for Complex Project Management (ICCPM) and the Association for Project Management (APM) have announced a strategic partnership that they believe will benefit project professionals around the world.



As two international peak bodies with a shared commitment to improving project outcomes, the organisations will combine

their expertise to meet the changing needs of projects.

Modern projects demand professionals who are both skilled project managers and effective complex project leaders. This partnership draws on the complementary expertise of APM



and ICCPM to deliver expanded professionalisation through networking opportunities, virtual events and thought leadership for members and the wider profession.

It will be interesting to see how key elements of these associations play to each other. Both have certification schemes and a range of supporting publications.

Licence To Practise. As we closed for press last month, a major story concerning the UK Police hit the headlines. The Home Office released a White Paper outlining changes to the police forces in UK. Most of the content is irrelevant to Project People but one aspect is very interesting and that concerns a licence to practise.

The purpose of this mandatory requirement is to ensure officers remain "match fit," have the right skills (e.g., tackling violence against women and girls), and meet consistent standards across all 43 forces.

This immediately puts police on a professional footing and for many observers, it reinforces the notion that it is not possible to claim professional status without such a licence. This is not merely a matter of status, it reflects society's perception that professionals have a duty that other occupations do not. This plays to classic profession theory and is outside my scope here but it raises many questions that we, as a nascent profession need to answer.

CLOSING REMARKS

Agile and Global Warming Consequences. Fishermen along the South West coast of England have encountered an unusual problem. Their lobster and crab catches are being depleted by an influx of octopuses. There have always been small numbers of octopuses in British waters, at least in the south, but this "bloom" is attributed to warming sea waters. It is well known that octopuses are highly intelligent and they have learned to extract crustaceans from lobster pots. While most fisher folk are suffering, one more adaptive fisherman is catching very large numbers of the critters and making a good living. This is clearly an example of Agile responses.

Terraforming in the 21st C. This is a subject we have addressed in the past and regular readers will recall the influence of the great SF author Robert A. Heinlein. Following in his footsteps, my landscape Imp reports the transformation of Northey Island. The National Trust has sunk 3 Thames barges on the edge of the island and filled them with about 3000 cubic metres of sediment to create an artificial island that is proving popular with the local bird life such as the Avocet and Redshanks. The barges themselves are helpful for the birds but in themselves, just a step in the terraforming process. As in



true terraforming, the aim is transformation into an environment that is human friendly. Here, the aim is somewhat different, with wildlife as the beneficiary as the flow of the river is altered so that the “island” grows and the surrounding land is transformed into a marshland.

Sporting Projects. This has been a good month for sporting projects, and I am delighted to be able to report that the **World T20** cricket championships, hosted by India and Sri Lanka have been a resounding success. To see countries that are not traditional cricket players giving good accounts of themselves is deeply satisfying. No doubt the inclusion of this form of cricket in the summer Olympics has something to do with it but now many more people can see, and enjoy, a wonderful sport.

Not to be outdone, I can report that not only have we successfully exported Cricket but we have imported that great 1,500 years old Japanese martial art, **Sumo**. The first UK Championships were held at Ulster University’s sports centre



Image: Charles Mcquillan/Getty Images

As *The Times* commented, Observers may laugh, yet sumo’s fortunes in Britain are turning. Those in the sport say it is enjoying a surge in popularity — largely fuelled by social media — as more people come to appreciate its physicality, technicality and prestige. If you missed the British Championships, you can catch the Euros which will be held in Stirling, Scotland in the summer.

“It is one of Britain’s fastest-growing sports,” said Scott Findlay, a former sumo champion who founded British Sumo in 2023. “Three or so years ago we had just two clubs in England. Now we’ve got 15 or 16 across all four nations

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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