

UK Project Management Round Up¹



*By Dr Miles Shepherd
Executive Advisor & International Correspondent
Salisbury, England, UK*

INTRODUCTION

The past month has been one of deeply unsettling news all around the globe and for older readers will bring back unpleasant memories of times we all hoped were behind us. We got through those so let's hope we get through these. In the meantime, Spring has certainly sprung, daffodils are almost over here, and the bluebells are just coming out so let's get on with the UK News.

GOOD NEWS

As the sun is shining, the clocks have sprung forward it is only fitting to start with better news. This week seems to have brought good news about a Scottish turbine deal and the recommissioning of a Welsh hydrogen plant as well as some other snippets to encourage project people that all is not lost in the projectosphere.

A Fair Wind. Taking it from the top (of the country), we learn that Scotland will benefit from new clean energy jobs as energy firm **Vestas** have revealed plans for a major wind factory in Scotland, creating up to 500 skilled jobs. The factory, which will produce nacelles and hubs, major components in building a wind turbine, has been made possible following the government's poorly supported offshore wind auction which we reported last month. The auction, AR7, secured 8.4 GW of new offshore projects.

Green Link. Nothing to do with the many fine golf courses up North, Eastern Green Link 4 (EGL4) is a new High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) electrical link that will connect Fife in Scotland with Norfolk in England. One of many transmission upgrades that are planned in the UK, the project will play a key role in the UK's transition to Net Zero.

¹ How to cite this report: Shepherd, M.M. (2026). Uk Project Management Round Up, report, *PM World Journal*, Vol XV, Issue IV, April 2026

The 530 km high-voltage cable will be able to transmit enough electricity to power the equivalent of 1.5 million UK homes.

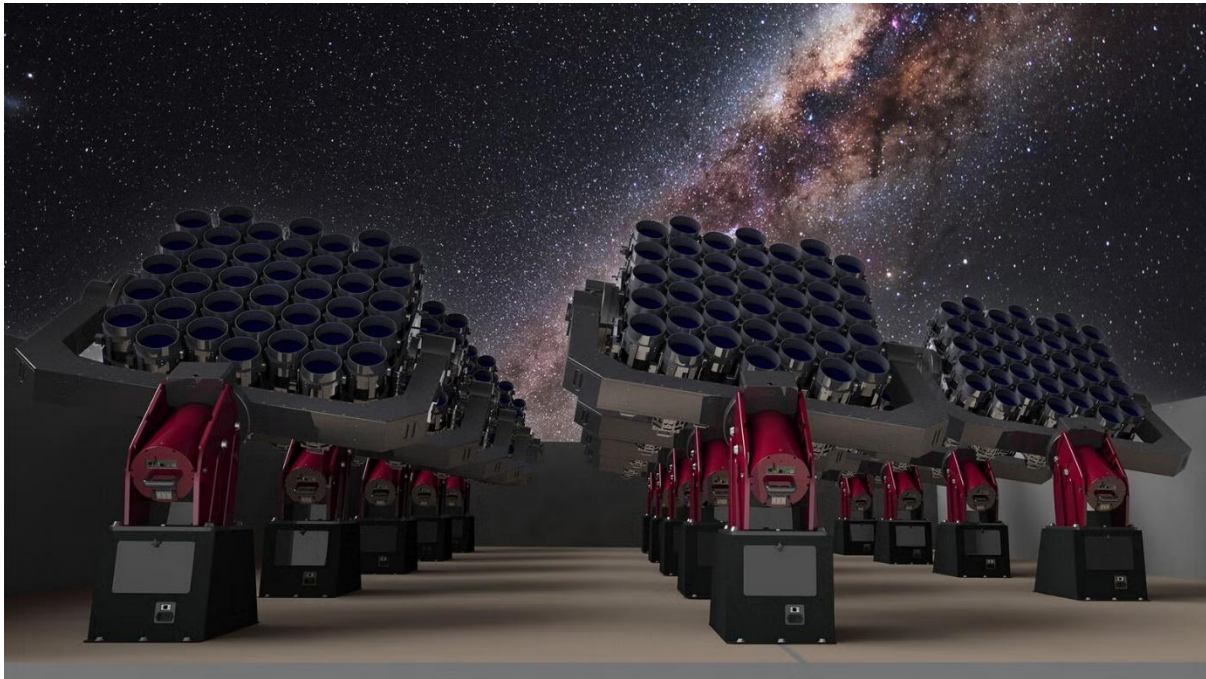
ScottishPower has secured £600m National Wealth Fund green financing for this strategic UK subsea power link. This transaction builds on the National Wealth Fund's £600 million loan in May 2025 to support the development of seven of ScottishPower's priority network initiatives.

Welsh Gas Station. Moving south, to South Wales in fact, we learn that construction is expected to start this year on a £50m hydrogen production plant at Milford Haven. It will be built on the site of a former oil refinery at the Impala terminal, previously Puma Energy in a project supported by UK government's hydrogen allocation round (HAR). Thus It is one of the first projects of its kind supported by HAR to be given the go-ahead by investors and is being developed by **MorGen Energy**, a Zurich-based company founded in 2021 to develop large-scale green hydrogen projects.

Once operational the plant is expected to produce about 2,000 tonnes of low-carbon hydrogen annually for uses including industrial heating, manufacturing and decarbonising the Milford Haven port.

MorGen said the electricity for the plant, which is expected to achieve more than 15,000 tonnes of CO₂e emissions savings annually, will come from existing and new renewable sources - mainly windfarms, in the UK.

Another good view. I have to admit, this one caught me out. I know about the Miles Square array but MOTHRA to me is a spider, however dispatches from parts foreign: tell me it is actually the Massive Optical Telephoto Hyperspectral Robotic Array currently under construction at the El Sauce Observatory in Chile. The telescope's construction started in the spring of 2025, and it is expected to become fully operational by the end of this year.



Mothra (segment above) is a distributed-aperture telescope composed of 1,140 Canon telephoto lenses, which together synthesise the power of a single giant telescope. This design has grown out of the Dragonfly Telephoto Array concept which initially demonstrated the capability to find and study extremely faint, extended structures. Co-created by Yale astronomer **Pieter van Dokkum** and University of Toronto astronomer **Roberto Abraham** it is based on design concepts from van Dokkum and Abraham's groundbreaking Dragonfly Telescope.

And why am I reporting a development in South America run by an Ivy League University? Well, **Alex Gerko**, a British Billionaire, is contributing tens of millions to the project. Generosity is alive and well in UK!

Long Life Projects. In some ways, these are not news as we have reported them in the past, but I was interested in these two as they rejoice in the title "project. Furst up is the **JUICE project**. Everyone knows this as the Jupiter Icy Moons Explorer, launched in 2023 by the European Space Agency (ESA). Last year, it spotted an "intruder" in the form of comet 3I/Atlas. First logged in July last year, it was quickly determined from its trajectory that it wasn't gravitationally bound to our Sun, which meant it had formed around another star. During 3I/Atlas's closest approach, the ESA switched on five of Juice's instruments. Each looks at the comet in a different way, but it was built for the outer Solar System, where sunlight is weak. Information from the mission is trickling back at the moment and is expected to be released soon. But the larger story is that this probably won't be the last interstellar visitor. For decades, such objects were theoretical curiosities. Three have now been identified in less than a decade.

Next we have the **Eden Project**. Conceived by **Sir Tim Smits**, this project opened 25 years ago after a 4 year construction. It was managed by **Tim Carter**, who went on to become Chairman of the Association for Project Management Chairmen (APM). The project consists of a series of biomes, some very large – the rainforest created under the glazed domes quickly reached the roof 50 metres up. Within a few years it began to create its own wind and moisture.



The main objective of the project is to reconnect people with the natural environment using cultivation. Beyond horticulture and education, the attraction has been influential in energy and sustainability. A 4.7km-deep geothermal borehole provides heating for growing plants and keeping the biomes warm. As we reported last month, the UK's first geothermal power plant opened at Redruth in Cornwall.

The Project is not unique as two others have been built, in Dubai and Qingdao, eastern China, the latter having opened last year. And more Edens are coming. One is a £100 million scheme planned for Morecambe Bay, in Lancashire, which Smit bills as a “theatre of life”. The site, about a third of the size of the Cornish one, will be focused on putting on shows about tides, marine life and birds. Work should start this year, and it is expected to open in 2028. Another is planned for Dundee, focusing on using local materials for construction. It could also use geothermal energy.

NOT SO GOOD NEWS

As usual, there is plenty of not so good news but this month we will just look at a small selection.

➤ **Glen Sannox**. This is the ferry that was delivered late and enormously over budget. It has been hit with further problems this year. It returned to service after a 3 month lay up for an extended annual overhaul and remedial work to tackle a vibration issue. It ran for just a week before it limped back to its base after a recurrence of the port main engine problem that took it out of service. Now, operators CalMac reported to the Scottish Parliament that it needs new propellers as part of multi-million pound repairs after just over a year in service. The latest news is that seven of the operator's ten main vessels were out of action, causing cancellations and reduced sailings to islands off the west coast. This might be an appropriate time to look at how the Faroe Islands manage their inter-island travel. Their approach is to tunnel and has been a major driving force behind their economy!

➤ **Horizon Project.** Readers cannot have forgotten this debacle so I will not rehash the issues here. What is notable is that the Government compensation scheme has made some progress in compensating victims, with more than 11,300 claimants having received payments and £1.44 billion distributed so far. However, the House of Commons Business and Trade committee has reported “serious structural failings persist” in the redress system and condemned Fujitsu for failing even to offer an interim payment while the taxpayer shoulders the bill.

➤ **Government IT Systems.** First we had issues with the IT supporting the Office of National Statistics, now we learn that Companies House, the agency that records details of all companies in UK, has identified a major data compromise that apparently was caused during an update to its online filing system in October 2025. It told all companies “to check their registered details and filing history to make sure everything appears correct”. Many companies, including my own, did not receive this alert. Users of the WebFiling system could see any other company’s information simply by pressing the “back” key of their keyboard at a particular time. “These are precisely the kinds of data used for fraud: impersonation, phishing, identity checks, and social engineering — particularly targeting directors of small companies.

OTHER PROJECT NEWS

High Speed 2 – Latest. Just when you thought it was all over, we have further news of this monster project. After the good news about the bat tunnel (January), my Home Counties Imp reports that the firm is to formally explore reducing the speed of its trains. This will be a novel approach as they are not actually running any trains, but someone has come up with the idea to slow down the trains and so save billions, and reduce constriction delays. This must be quite concerning for management as modelling could show that if you slow running down to zero, you will not need to complete any further construction. Could be a win-win for some people!

If slowing trains is not sufficient, you can also reduce the length of the trains. Press reports claimed Ministers were preparing to unveil fresh delays and cost over-runs in the controversial rail project and so the £2 billion contract to build dozens of “bullet trains” is likely to be rewritten. The contract, signed in 2021, is a joint venture between Japanese firm **Hitachi** and France’s **Alstom** for 54 trains to be built at sites in Derby, Crewe and Co Durham. It was said at the time that the deal would support or create 2,500 UK jobs.

Since contract award, several parameters, including length of the new line, have altered and officials from the Department for Transport and counterparts at the two train makers have opened talks about reducing the number of trains, as well as reconfiguring the train length. This is a lose-lose situation as changing the terms of the contract could result in penalty payments or compensation to the two train makers.



Image: HS2

My excessively busy Home Counties Imp also reports on the possibility that Trains ordered for HS2 could be downgraded for use elsewhere on the rail network due to the new route's chronic delays. Department for Transport (DfT) is considering a plan for both Hitachi and Alstom to produce trains that could be used for not only HS2 but also the existing London to Birmingham west coast main line, where the top speed is 125mph. A report in *The Times* claims this would present serious issues for the Hitachi plant near Durham and the Alstom plant in Derby, where production was due to begin this year to provide 54 of the 225mph, 200m HS2 trains. A delay would mean both plants would have large gaps in their workstreams, and could need to cut their reduced workforces even further.

Thames Water The troubled utilities firm has announced a new £10bn recovery plan based on a proposal from London & Valley Water (L&VW), a consortium of creditors holding the vast majority of the company's senior debt. L&VW is headed by a group of American hedge funds and dealers in distressed debt, and has put forward new plans to inject £3.35 billion of equity and up to £6.55 billion in new debt to recapitalise Britain's largest privatised water monopoly.

Thames Water said the proposal "remains subject to ongoing review by the company, Ofwat and other regulators, and subject to discussion with the company's financial stakeholders". We have not heard anything from the Regulator (OFWAT) but then, negotiations have been dragging on for more than 2 years. If the scheme is approved it will provide continued funding for the large number of projects in the pipeline.

Heathrow Expansion Plans. Another mega project, the plans to expand London's foremost airport have been in the news quite a bit recently. Megaprojects always seem to attract a great deal of opposition, and not just from the professional protest sector. The year got off to a good start with accusations that the \$49 bn project to build a third runway is a vanity project that does not meet the needs of passengers, according to research reported in *The Times*. The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport have claimed that the assumptions underlying the plans are based on 10-year-old data. Chris Tarry, the chairman of the institute's aviation policy group and an experienced industry analyst and consultant has urged planners "to consider how this

market has changed”. Both passenger growth and capacity at other London airports were “far in excess of what had been expected.”



Mr Tarry seems to have a point as we also learned the car parking arrangements planned amount to the world’s most expensive car park. A leaked briefing paper shared with airlines last year and seen by *The Times* included a graphic that put the cost of the car parks, called the northern and southern parkway, at a total of £2.6 billion

Image: Grimshaw Architects/Heathrow Airport.

To cap a series of difficult press reports, we get the news that refurbishing a network of service tunnels under Heathrow originally estimated at £66 million has ballooned from to £555 million. Heathrow’s independent fund surveyor report shows that the cost of upgrading the airport’s “main tunnel” has risen from £21 million to £342 million. Refurbishing a cargo tunnel will now cost £213 million, compared to the £45 million previously reported.

Dubious Benefits. This should probably be in the Not so Good section, but these all have something in common, a problem with their benefits.

➤ **Shift Work.** First the good news – a helicopter landing pad for the Royal Sussex County Hospital in Brighton has opened. The not-so-good news is that the landing pad cannot be used in high winds (like most landing Helicopter landing sites) but cannot be used at night or reduced visibility. This helipad is more likely to be affected by poor weather as it is on top of a 15-storey hospital tower block on a windy coastline about 500 metres from the sea. Similar NHS hospital helipads have typically been built within two years at a cost of £5 to £7 million, the Brighton project has been plagued by problems, taken a decade to finish and cost £15.6 million.

➤ **Who Benefits?** The headlines claim the taxpayer will lose £120 million annually when the Lower Thames Crossing is completed. This is based on the transfer of income from the Dartford Crossing to the new company that will build, operate and maintain the new tunnel. The project is billed by the government as “the largest road



building project for a generation”, and involves the construction of a 14-mile road, including twin 2.6-mile tunnels under the Thames. The government has already committed to invest £3.1 billion of taxpayers’ money to begin construction and attract private capital, though it has no plans to publish a full business case for the scheme until 2028. The estimated costs have risen since

2017 from no more than £6.8 billion to almost £11 billion. Interestingly, the government hired Lazard earlier to advise on the project and seek private sector investors blowing a cool £20 million on the tender alone, Press reports speculate that the crossing is to be built and operated by a private company, using the regulated asset base (RAB) funding model, last year employed to finance the Sizewell C nuclear power station.

➤ **Long Bridge.** This is a story held over from last month and does not have anything to do with the famous car plant. It is about a foot bridge over a road in Yorkshire that has been 11 years in the planning and is set to cost about £13m. Local authorities responsible for infrastructure have come up with a scheme to allow pedestrians and cyclists to cross a busy road. The route is a 400-metre footbridge with 6 bends (to deter cyclists from speeding!). In the planning process for over a decade, the winding design is highly complex and will cost £13 million, nearly £32,000 per metre. There is also a significant lack of local support. The cost of the entire project — once the second-phase widening of the pavement on the way from Silsden

to allow proper access is included — is estimated at £24 million. The £11 million for phase two has not been secured.



Steeton Silsden crossing

Image: WYCA

➤ **Universal Benefit.** Last year came the good news that Comcast, perpetrators of Universal Studios had decided to build a multibillion-pound theme park on a 500-acre former brickworks in Bedfordshire. This was particularly welcome to Government ears. Perhaps as a consequence, Comcast avoided the typical planning permission hold ups (see January report) was fast-tracked by granting the park a special development order in last December. Comcast, which reported income before tax of \$25.7 billion (£19.2 billion) last year on revenue of \$123.7 billion, has estimated that the new Universal Studios will provide a £50 billion boost to the UK economy. The park is expected to support 20,000 construction jobs before opening in 2031 and another 8,000 roles once the attraction is up and running, of which 80 per cent is likely to come from the local area. . As always, there is a sting in the tail and this sting is £1 bn in aid which would mainly fund transport and infrastructure links, is significantly more than the £500 million that was previously thought to have been set aside as preparations gather momentum, according to sources familiar with the situation. Of course, all this is speculative and the Press claim that both sides have been tight-lipped about the overall cost of the theme park as well as the government aid to support it.

CLOSING REMARKS

➤ **Osprey Projects.** The Spring migration is in full flow this month and several of the Osprey projects have reported arrivals of well-known birds. I live near an osprey fly way but have not seen any, white tailed eagles, yes, several. The nearest osprey project is on the coast, at Poole Harbour and another I follow is at Rutland Water in the Midlands. Both report nesting activities so I hope my local reserve will soon host one or more.

➤ **Nightjars Sing.** This is a bird I have never seen and many much more experienced birders in this country are in the same boat. However, if you live around areas like the New Forest, it is highly likely you have heard them. They sing as the sun goes down, and into the early evening – like many a project manager I hear some say! However their some, or churring, is unique among its fellow birds. The bird also has a supernatural reputation – again like some project people I know – for stealing milk from goats. One of our major National Parks has reported a significant increase in churring over the last 12 months. In case you think you have seen one, here is an image from the British Trust for Ornithology by Chris Knights.



➤ **Fewer Sore Eyes.** My International Imp reports from the Far East with remarkable news that will certainly not bring a tear to your eye. Our Japanese colleagues have successfully completed a project to provide the world with onions that do not make you cry when cutting them up! Called the Smile Ball, this new development will reduce the many arcane practices of chefs, amateur and professional to prevent copious weeping while handling traditional onions. This is a good news item and not to be confused with the SUNION, an American onion sold in one of our up-market supermarkets at £1.60 for 3.

About the Author



Dr Miles Shepherd

Salisbury, UK



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.