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UK Project Management Round Up

By Miles Shepherd

Project Completions!

The past month has seen the completions of some very significant projects in the UK. Perhaps the most eye catching was the opening of St Pancras Station by HM The Queen. The glittering ceremony marked the end of one major element in a series of related projects around high speed transport. This programme included the provision of a high speed link between London and the Channel Tunnel and the move of the London end of the Eurostar link from Waterloo in south London to St Pancras. The time saving is minimal (around 20 - 30 minutes between London and Paris or Brussels) but the trip from Central London compares favourably with air travel.

St Pancras Station

The £800 million St Pancras project transformed a semi derelict Victorian station which according the BBC 'represented everything mid-20th Century Britain hated about the 19th Century - at once obsolete, pompous and absurd'. However, the old station had supporters, notably the late poet laureate, John Betjeman, who helped lead a campaign to save the building. The structure was listed Grade 1 just 10 days before it was due to be demolished and redeveloped as a sports hall and social housing. Subsequently, it has emerged as not just a railway station but a 'destination' in its own right with up-market



Photo courtesy BBC News

eateries ranging from a brasserie through less formal 'take aways' and Europe's longest champagne bar to complement the extensive shopping facilities located in the vaults, previously used to store beer barrels.

In fact, the opulent new Eurostar station is only one of three co-located rail stations with the surface train service Thames Link facility in the new sub-surface platforms and a fully rebuilt Tube station serving the Northern, Piccadilly and Victoria lines. There is speculation that the Cross River Tram may soon be serving King's Cross and St Pancras, providing even better access from the south and west of London and beyond.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Now known as High Speed 1, the Channel Tunnel Rail Link is the overall programme to bring high speed trains into London. Hitherto, Eurostar trains reduced speed from Ashford in Kent and terminated at Waterloo in South London; the programme delivers a new, much faster line from the Channel Tunnel to London from the east. Programme developer London & Continental Railways said the newly refurbished St Pancras terminus was the jewel in the crown of their 10 year £5.8bn project to bringing high speed rail travel to the UK. The opening also marked the completion of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link - the first new railway in England for over 60 years, and the first to operate at speeds of over 250 Kph.

HS1 is the largest civil engineering project in UK with main elements of the project including:

- 109km of new high speed track alignment (300Kph)
- three major tunnel sections with a total length of 25km
- four railway station developments (St Pancras Terminal, Stratford, Ebbsfleet and Ashford)
- major bridge across the River Medway (the longest span high speed rail viaduct in Europe)
- 152 bridges and structures along the route in a wide variety of ground conditions

Train, track and signalling technology is essentially a product of the expertise of French railway company SNCF, derived from three decades' work on the TGV programme.

The twin tunnels bored under London were driven from Stratford westwards towards St Pancras, eastwards towards Dagenham and from Dagenham westwards to connect with the tunnel from Stratford. The tunnel boring machines were 120 m long and weighed 1,100 tonnes. The depth of the tunnel varies from 24 m to 50 m.

A complex junction has been constructed north of St Pancras with connections to the East Coast Main Line, North London Line (for West Coast Main Line) and Midland Main Line. As part of the works, tunnels connecting the East Coast Main Line to the Thameslink route were also built.

The programme has been delivered to budget and on time.

Air Traffic Control

Saturday 25 November saw the completion of one of the long running sagas of British project management when the old London Terminal Control Centre transferred its function to the National Air Traffic Service's London Area Traffic Centre (LATC) at Swanwick. LATC is one of the largest and most advanced air traffic control centres in the world, handling some 6,500 flights a day and more than 90 million a year. With the final transfer of terminal support for London's 6 airports, the project that began in 1992 is finally closed.



Development of the Swanwick site began in the early 1990's and the Centre went operational in 2002, some 6 years late and at a cost of £623m, more than double its original estimate. Some sources pointed to the lack of lessons learned from the other computer project disaster when the London Stock Exchange share dealing system 'Taurus' was abandoned. Both systems relied on

converting existing US programs to operate in UK legal and operational environments. In a BBC report from August 2000, it was noted that some 1400 independent bugs had been identified by an independent audit and these threatened to delay the opening further. However, by increasing the number of software and other engineering staff, the delayed target was met. Other sources note that the design concept at Swanwick signaled a major change in the way controllers were to work. There were long running arguments over work methods which brought back to mind the similar issues in the ill-fated London Ambulance Service Dispatch System.

The National Air Traffic Service plans to invest nearly £1Bn over the next 10 years to further upgrade a system that comprises 357 civil controllers, 170 civil assistants, 35 operational engineers, 47 specialist engineers and 35 military ATC staff. In addition, the computer system has more than two million lines of software code – one of the most sophisticated IT projects in the country - representing over 3,300 functions, using 23 sub-systems connected

by over 30 miles of cable. More than 650,000 hours of testing has been conducted on the system.

Arts and Media

Not all the completing projects this month have been engineering based. One that combined research and the arts culminates this week in the launch of a new exhibition at the United Kingdom's National Gallery. 'Discoveries: New Research into British Collections', the rather dry title of the exhibition hides dedicated work over many years by a team of 25 art experts who tracked down an amazing range of largely forgotten art works.

According the National Gallery website, 'Discoveries brings together paintings from across the country, spanning 500 years, some of which have never been seen in public before. It will demonstrate the astonishing range and quality of our UK public collections and illustrate the wide variety of work that has been done by the National Inventory Research Project.' Linked to the exhibition is the launch of the project's online database of nearly 8,000 paintings in over 200 UK museums and galleries. This new facility brings public accessibility to works held in small public collects and provides information which has resulted in many new collection displays and educational initiatives in the institutions involved

Outside London, the eclectic collection gathered by Lt Gen Pitt Rivers in the 19th has been re-housed in the new £8m extension.

The museum was founded in 1884 when General Pitt Rivers, an influential figure in the development of archaeology and evolutionary anthropology, gave his collection to Oxford University. The collection contained more than 18,000 objects but there are now over half a million. Many were donated by early anthropologists and explorers. The collection includes extensive photographic and sound archives which contain early records of great importance. The Museum continues to collect through donations, bequests, special purchases and through its staff and students, in the course of their fieldwork.



Original entrance (photo © Pitt Rivers Museum)

The project extension project was the first stage in long term development. The next phase of its development plan to improve public and academic facilities, while maintaining the original atmosphere of the historic collections.

Higher Education Academy launches Teaching and Learning in Project Management Network

Following September's highly successful 3rd Conference on Teaching and Learning in Project Management organised by Bournemouth University's **Roger Atkinson**, the Higher Education Academy have announced that they are to sponsor a network devoted to improving how project management is taught. A team lead by Dr Atkinson met last week to plan early initiatives. It is expected that an initial workshop will be held in the central region of England to address issues of learning style, teaching approaches and assessment issues.

Association for Project Management News

➤ Academic Accreditation

This initiative comes hard on the heels of Association for Project Management's announcement at their November conference that academic programme accreditation will soon be available. A team of assessors is being assembled and it is expected that after induction workshops to be held in December, accreditation work will begin with universities that have had their programmes lodged with APM for some time. It is not yet clear when the service opens to other universities.



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