

## REGIONAL REPORT – UNITED KINGDOM



### UK Project Management Round Up March 2007

*By Miles Shepherd*



#### London Olympics

These are good days to be a project manager. Project and programme management continue to make a major impact on UK businesses and the importance is well recognised in every sector of the British economy. A glance at the Daily Telegraph, the most widely read broadsheet newspaper in UK,

shows that opportunities are plentiful for adequately qualified professionals.

This week, in their job supplement, front page coverage was given to the search for two key project related roles: Director of Projects for a major corporation in Dubai and Director of Strategy and Programme Management for London 2012 Organising Committee. The first deals with construction projects and is certain to include a major portfolio of high profile projects.

The second concerns a major programme of national importance. The rumoured £9bn budget and famously immutable schedule make this appointment one that will challenge even the most experienced Programme Manager. Interestingly, the critical feature of the person specification is one of Board level programme management experience, something that has been in short supply in UK in recent years. The role recognises many of the critical aspects of programme, with multiple stakeholders management featuring strongly along with an ability to think strategically. Contrast this with the problems of 'selling PM' to senior management that was a preoccupation of the professional societies in the recent past. The

message is clear – programme management in any guise is now a key professional discipline.

The London Olympics continues to attract controversy with speculation in press and TV that the budget has tripled to £9bn. So far, the British Government has refused to clarify just what the budget is expected to cover, so scope is as yet unclear but major tasks reported in the press include regeneration and a 100% escalation factor for construction projects.

If true, this last factor is a sad reflection on the reputation of the construction industry's ability to estimate or contract. It will be interesting to see what contract forms will be used. After the experience of Wembley Stadium development, there may well be a case to employ the less adversarial New Engineering Contract.

### Professional Matters

Professional societies dealing with project management are not confined to the UK's Association for Project Management (APM). The US based Project Management Institute (PMI) has a UK branch and the British Computer Society and Chartered Management Institute are also major providers of professional support for Project Managers. In the coming months, each of these societies will be featured to provide an overview of PM activity in UK.

Arguably the most active society is APM which has national coverage with its 13 Branches, many of which also have local chapters. The APM, Mike Nichols and APM President (and PM Forum Global adviser) Dr Martin Barnes hosted a lunch for the Honorary APM Fellows at the historic Connaught Hotel in London on 22 February. Those present included all the surviving Presidents and 4 of the last 5 Chairmen among the 26 diners. There was a strong PM Forum representation with the London Correspondent as well as Prof Peter Morris and Dr Martin Barnes, both Global Advisors.



APM's main event for March will be their Annual Dinner, held at London's prestigious Dorchester Hotel on 29 March while for those who are unable to get to London, the North West Branch hold their Awards Dinner in Newcastle on the same date. A week earlier, the Aberdeen Chapter of Scotland Branch holds their Awards Celebration with 3 presentations by graduating MSc students.

Continuing the theme of students, APM HQ holds their annual Students weekend which is sponsored by BAE Systems. This event is part of the programme put together by APM Inspire, a London based initiative which provides a unique forum for entry level professionals and students who are studying for or pursuing a career in project management. APM Inspire is also hosting a 'Bring Your Boss Quiz' on 22 March.

**apmINSPIRE**

Full details of their programme can be found at <http://www.apm.org.uk/InspireEvents.asp>

Other attractions for UK based PM specialists include Project Challenge (14 – 15 March 2007) to be held at the National Motorcycle Museum in Coventry. This major event, one of the largest project and programme management events in UK, has an extensive exhibition as well as free seminars and excellent networking opportunities. See <http://www.pmforum.org/blogs/news/2007/02/major-project-risk-management.html> for further details. A full report will appear next month.

With public interest in programme and project management showing no signs of weakening and strong Government endorsement through the Office of Government Commerce, these are indeed good times to be a project manager.



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