

REGIONAL REPORT- UNITED KINGDOM



UK Project Management Round Up

By Miles Shepherd

IPMA World Congress

The European Project Management scene in Europe has been dominated by the 21st IPMA World Congress in Krakow, Poland. Project Managers from some 51 countries took part in the first IPMA Congress in Europe for 2 years. There was a strong UK presence in Poland with most of the APM (Association for Project Management) senior management taking an active part.

Immediate Past Chairman Tom Taylor kept a large audience at the inaugural Nation to Nation Forum engaged with his amusing and informative 'Genetically Modified PMs' – and was asked to repeat the performance for a wider audience. Other past APM Chairs also took active parts in this prestigious event with APM President Martin Barnes chairing the opening and closing sessions, keynotes from Professors Peter Morris and Rodney Turner and a workshop on emerging PM trends for Young Crew by Global Advisor, Miles Shepherd. A significant number of APM Trustees and members also took part.



Five past Chairmen of APM, L to R: Martin Barnes, Peter Morris, Rodney Turner, Miles Shepherd and Tom Taylor

Emergency Projects

A constant talking point in UK is always the weather and June has provided lots of opportunity with record levels of rain in many parts of the country leading to flooding and loss of life. Worst hit is the north of the country with extensive flooding around Doncaster and Sheffield.



Picture courtesy BBC News
Flooding in northern England

The floods highlight a special type of project management that is often neglected – the emergency project. With these projects, it is impossible to plan in the normal way as time is of the essence and so pre-planned contingency projects have to be mobilised. Emeritus Professor Stephen Wearne has drawn attention to the difficulties of planning this type of project. (Reference to APM awards in 2005 when Professor Wearne was awarded the prestigious Sir Monty Finniston Award for

his investigation of the management of urgent and emergency recovery projects following flood, rail and other threats and disasters in various countries - http://www.pmforum.org/scene/2005_1112_2.htm.)

In the UK floods, emergency services reacted rapidly to life threatening situations but in the longer term, a range of reactive projects will be needed to reinforce flood protection works, repair damage to the infrastructure such as railway lines where trackways have been washed away and dams weakened by the rapid build up of water. While these floods are nowhere as widespread or damaging as those in India and Pakistan, damage is estimated at more than £1Bn.

New Projects

A rash of major project awards have been announced. BioFuel News reports that international project management and cost consultants Faithful+Gould has been appointed to the project which will see the development of the UK's first large-scale bioethanol production facility. The plant in Wilton in the North East, is expected to create 800 jobs during the construction phase and a further 100 permanent jobs when production begins in 2009. Faithful+Gould will provide commercial and cost management support to the implementation phase.

Elsewhere, AME Info reports that EC Harris, a leading UK based consultancy with offices throughout the world, is to join Sama Dubai the international real estate and investment arm of Dubai Holding, in a joint venture to create a world class integrated project management company operating in the real estate, infrastructure and construction sectors.

The joint venture will bring together Sama Dubai's existing project management team of over 200 staff and EC Harris's over 90 years experience of delivering value through the application of knowledge, professional skills and technology to clients' projects.

Established in 1911 EC Harris has extensive civil engineering and infrastructure expertise. With 43 offices around the world employing over 3,000 people, EC Harris has developed a cultural awareness as well as professional knowledge and expertise. Some of its landmark projects include BAA's Terminal 5 at Heathrow, Emirates Stadium UK, Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry Tower and Dubai Marina, UAE.

Public Sector Projects

Two recent reports highlight the perception of project management as ineffective so far as public sector projects are concerned. In Scotland, the auditor general's findings on two of the biggest projects show mixed results according to Finance Week. Plans for the new Edinburgh tram system are judged to be generally on track, and a clear governance structure already in place. With procurement striking the right balance between low cost and acceptably low risk, a risk management strategy in place and well defined reporting procedures, the report implies that Phase 1 can be completed within its £594m budget by 2011. The auditor general also notes that £79m would be lost if the project were now discontinued, most incurred in drawing up plans and getting parliament to approve them.

In sharp contrast, the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link (EARL) gets a less enthusiastic write-up, with the auditor finding holes in the funding plan and misalignments in the governance structure. His report warns of a likely overrun by at least a year (to 2012), and a risk that costs will exceed the £650m upper range of estimates. It also notes that the government has not yet chosen between financing the project internally and seeking external funding, from the EU, airport operator BAA or rail track owner Network Rail.

Meanwhile in London Borough Haringey, local politicians have yet again criticised and expressed their concern at the Council's poorly controlled and ineffective project management. Reporting on the local Cabinet meeting of top Labour councillors on 19th June 2007, eGov Monitor comments that a project report included no summary budget information for almost 20% of the projects. More significantly the report showed over half the projects are running late or forecast to complete after their "original end date" and a further 20% show no summary date information on which to see whether they are late or not. Opposition councillors believe this shows a significant lack of attention to detail and poor track record of running large projects that have resulted in huge waste of taxpayers' money.

While these reports overlook the very significant number of successful local projects ranging from school refurbishment and many effective PFI projects throughout the country, the public perception of project management at local and national government level remains low.



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