

## REGIONAL REPORT – UNITED KINGDOM – JANUARY 2010



## UK Project Management Round Up

*By Miles Shepherd*

*International Correspondent for PMForum & PM World Today  
Salisbury, England, UK*

## The Past Decade

Here we are at the start of a new decade – and how different it all was 10 years ago when we were all breathing a collective sigh of relief. The world had not come to an end as some fundamentalists feared, nor had all the computer controlled systems from aircraft to lifts, come crashing down as the so called Millennium Bug caused computers to shift date as the rollover from 99 to 00 occurred. As a project manager responsible for my company's Millennium project, I was pretty relieved, especially as we were closely involved in nuclear power projects. The success of this and countless other projects round the world brought Project Managers into the public consciousness and we proudly crowed that project management had emerged as a professional discipline.



Courest Vintage Computing

The 'Noughties' have brought many changes to all our lives, and especially for project managers. There have been some incredibly impressive projects (such as High Speed 1) that have brought benefit to stakeholders and some equally abysmal project outcomes that have left the project owners millions out of pocket with little to show for their efforts.

The world has suffered cataclysmic events such as the tsunami which brought such enormous loss of life and destruction to communities from Indonesia through Thailand to Sri Lanka and many island states. There have been other shocking events such as the events of 9/11 in the United States of America and various other

terrorist events from London, through Madrid and Mumbai. War and pestilence too have brought havoc to parts of the world, some of them not so far distant.

That afflicted communities can be helped quickly and effectively is a tribute to the character of the people of countries affected and in many cases, such after natural disaster on the scale of the Tsunami and the Pakistan earthquake, also to the aid agencies who respond with practiced skill, bringing their considerable resources to bear in the days and weeks that follow. The local efforts that swing into immediate action are equally impressive.

The one thing that these events, natural or man-made, have in common is that the aftermath needs the skills and professionalism of Project Managers to address.

## Looking Back



Steam car record 2009

Some of the successful projects in UK include the capture of steam car record by a team that has been working for virtually the whole of the decade, showing that persistence pays!

High Speed 1, the engineering programme that linked the UK rail network to the European network through the Channel Tunnel saw a remarkable number of major

engineering projects managed via a centrally controlled programme. One of the more visible projects was the work at St Pancras station to provide a UK terminus for Eurostar while extending the high speed line from Ashford into the Capital. The broader programme saw the move of the existing Eurostar terminus from Waterloo, south of the River Thames to its new location to the north. This programme is also part of the transport plan for London and links into the Thames Gateway development and the London Olympics.



St Pancras Station



Heathrow Terminal 5

Not all projects have gone quite as well as High Speed 1 and many others that took place in the last 10 years. For instance, the exemplary work at Heathrow's Terminal 5 was marred at the last minute when comparatively simple human problems caused the breakdown of the baggage handling system.

Pioneering risk management approaches had ensured the build programme and technical infrastructure proceeded to plan but come the opening day, disaster struck when staff were unable to get to work on time and lack of experience on the new baggage system brought chaos. This was eventually sorted out but not before BAA, the airport owners who had handed over the project as planned to BA, the operator, both suffered major damage to their reputation and no little cost.

## Looking Forward

For many UK Project Managers, the new decade brings much promise for the profession. Building on the success that Prof Rodney Turner and Elsevier achieved in moving the International Journal of Project Management onto the Thompson Index, project management is becoming recognised as a true discipline and is attracting more academic interest. This is important not just to academics, but also to practitioners since it is only by exchanging the problems of practice with the theory of academia will we move forward to overcome the difficulties of bringing projects and programmes to successful conclusions. While this aspect has long been recognised in the traditional 'professions' of medicine and law, it is only just gaining traction in our field. While IJPM is the house journal of the International Project Management Association, the importance of this success is reflects on the profession, not just one group.



In UK, practitioners will look forward to the challenges ahead, notably in the New Nuclear field where 10 new power plants await design, construction and delivery. There are other vital programmes on the horizon as High Speed 2 promises to bring faster, more frequent and more efficient rail travel to the most heavily used long distance lines along the West Coast route. Other major rail infrastructure programmes include Crossrail which links major suburbs in the Thames Valley to Heathrow, provides new, faster, cleaner and newer link stations in central London and connects to the Olympic Park and stations to the east.



Several major programmes link into Britain's Olympics. Arguably the highest profile of all the major programmes in the new decade, the London Olympics will bring huge numbers of visitors, competitors and officials into London and surrounding area. Major work is under way to provide the sporting venues needed for the Games such as Broxbourne Park, venue for the white water canoe events. Many venues will provide legacy facilities in areas where sporting opportunities are restricted by lack of specialist sites. Transport infrastructure such as the two major rail programmes will also provide lasting benefit.

## The Profession in UK



Over the past ten years, the Association for Project Management (APM) has grown significantly, trebling in size and now operating from its own purpose built HQ. The decade has seen APM consolidate its position as the leading professional body in UK for project and programme managers, forging new and stronger links with Central Government through the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) and building its industry base which now includes 500 corporate and academic organisations as members.

While APM has always had a strong professional bent, the Noughties have brought a notable strengthening of this orientation; the Body of Knowledge has been revised after a substantial research programme, a competence frame work developed and alignment strategies to help industry members match themselves to APM's technical and developmental developments.

Against this background of professional developments, the Branch structure has provided a social as well as informative base that brings members together to share experience. A wide range of local and national events take place each year, ranging from the flagship Awards Dinner to technical presentations and specialist workshops flourish.



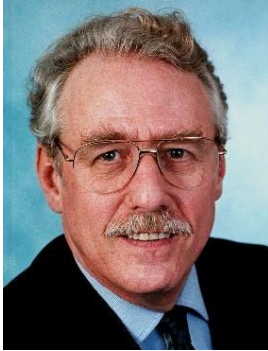
The Chartered Institute for IT  
Enabling the information society

APM is not the only body that represents the project management community and the British Computer Society's PROMS-G provides an flourishing milieu for IT project and programme managers. PROMS-G is a looser group than APM as it is a specialist group within another professional society and membership numbers are not immediately to hand. However, informal estimates put its UK membership at around 5000.

The Project Management Institute (PMI) has a flourishing UK Chapter which holds meetings in London, the Midlands and North of England as well as in Scotland. As with all professional societies, numbers fluctuate but PMI is around 3000 strong in UK.



There are other professional societies that have an interest in PM and these include the Royal Institution of British Architects, the engineering institutions and the Royal Institute for Chartered Surveyors. The point to note here is that all these societies provide vital support for the development of the profession.

**About the Author:****Miles Shepherd**

*Global Advisor  
International Correspondent - UK  
Based in Salisbury*



**Miles Shepherd** is a global advisor and International Correspondent for PMForum in the United Kingdom. He is also managing director for MS Projects Ltd, a consulting company supporting various UK Government agencies, nuclear industry organisations and other businesses. Miles has over 30 years' experience on a variety of projects in UK, Eastern Europe and Russia. His PM experience includes defence, major IT projects, decommissioning of nuclear reactors, rail and business projects for the UK Government and EU. Past Chair and Fellow of the Association for Project Management (APM), Miles is also past president and chair of the International Project Management Association (IPMA). Additional information about Mr. Shepherd can be found at <http://www.pmforum.org/ambassadors/ambassadors.htm#Shepherd>. Miles Shepherd is based near London and can be reached at [miles.shepherd@m-sp-ltd.co.uk](mailto:miles.shepherd@m-sp-ltd.co.uk).