

PROJECT

ISSUE 318
SPRING 2024
£14.50

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 Association for
Project Management



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MEET THE BBC'S RACHEL BALDWIN ● **HOW TO MANAGE PROJECT POLITICS**
PLUS: LEARNING FROM BILL & TED'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE



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An eclectic mix

One of the joys of being Editor of *Project* is the chance I get to cover such a variety of people and places. This issue has ended up celebrating the eclecticism of the work you do, and I hope the excitement of some of the projects included here chimes with a springtime feeling of new-found energy (we all need a boost at this time of year).

This issue we cover everything from the English National Ballet and the BBC to nuclear fusion and decarbonisation projects. The common thread to much of the project management work behind these is the need and desire for genuine collaboration. More and more, it's the people side of projects that's of importance to managers and leaders – and getting this right is often the critical piece of making a project a success.

Travel with me to the Oxfordshire campus of the Joint European Torus – a world-leading nuclear fusion machine that has carried out mind-blowing experiments and pushed human knowledge to its limits over the project's 40-year history. The plasma in its tokamak has created the hottest temperatures in our solar system, but after the last experiment was run in December, the decommissioning programme has begun, and I went to

meet the people behind this world-first project. I left impressed by the deep sense of purpose the team took from their internationally collaborative work, which will help make this net-zero energy source a realistic proposition in the coming decades.

For our Big Interview, we meet the BBC's Head of Programme and Project Delivery for broadcast and end-user technology, Rachel Baldwin, who recently won a Rise Award for her project management work (the judges praised her reputation for fostering collaboration in her team). Andrew Saunders uncovers her story of going from documentary maker to leading big technology projects. "It's an amazing organisation with a massive diversity of programmes and projects to run – the joy has been the variety of projects I've been able to manage," she tells us.

Collaboration, variety, a sense of purpose and the exhilaration of finding order in often chaotic uncertainty seems to be what drives many project professionals. Who could ask for more from their work? Read on for some motivating inspiration, tips and advice.

Emma De Vita is Editor of *Project*

**More and more,
it's the people side
of projects that's
of importance
to managers
and leaders**



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Cover price: £14.50
Annual subscription fee:
£58 (UK); £68.20 (Europe);
£79 (international)

PROJECT

(ISSN 0957-7033) is published by the Association for Project Management in association with Think, 65 Riding House Street, London W1W 7EH
Tel: 020 3771 7200
thinkpublishing.co.uk



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Once the Olympics circus has moved on, the building will become a sports centre for the local community

A Parisian deep dive

Yes, it's time for another summer of Olympic and Paralympic Games, this time in Paris. The Aquatics Centre, built in the down-at-heel neighbourhood of Seine-Saint-Denis, is the only new permanent building to be commissioned for the Games and will host water polo, diving and synchronised swimming competitions. The pool is designed to be flexible, with a mobile bulkhead positioned between the competition pool and the diving pool so that the lengths of the pools can be changed for different events. For the Paralympic Games, the building will be converted into a boccia stadium, and once the Olympics circus has moved on, the building will become

a sports centre for the local community. The Aquatics Centre and pedestrian and cycle bridge that connects it with the Stade de France over the A1 motorway will be delivered by a consortium comprising Dutch studio VenhoevenCS and French architectural practice Ateliers 2/3/4/, and led by Bouygues Bâtiment Ile-de-France with Récréa and Dalkia. The centre's wooden structure includes a thin, floating and wavy roof that is entirely covered with solar panels, making it one of the largest urban photovoltaic farms in France. The entire space will be naturally lit, with both ends made from glass walls. Paris 2024 is aiming to be the most sustainable Olympic Games in history.

DESIGN: VENHOEVENS & ATELIERS 2/3/4/ IMAGE: PROLOG

Perspectives

The gender pay gap • Carbon reduction leadership • The AI revolution • Going global with ChPP

Baroness Valentine

The crossbench peer reflects on her varied career in a male-dominated world and whether restructuring government could improve the viability of long-term projects



Baroness Valentine, Chair of Heathrow Southern Railway and Co-director of Business in the Community, previously sat on the boards of Crossrail and HS2, among many other senior roles, including running London First, whose mission was to make London the best place in the world to do business. Her focus now as a crossbench peer is on levelling up.

Q There are many twists and turns in your career...

A The twists and turns are partly because I thought of myself as an equal to all the men around me and I was expecting ambitious things of myself. It wasn't until much later on that I realised that that wasn't really how other people saw me. So that has caused some of the twists and turns.

Q Do you think the business environment now is more inclusive?

A It has definitely got better. I didn't know that I minded until I was in a 50/50 male/female environment

in London First and it was such a relief to not have to talk about male subjects all the time. In Barings [Bank] it was shooting and fishing. In British Oxygen Company it was golfing, but in London First, at last, I managed to have conversations about other things rather than being stuck in the rut that a very male environment gives you... Your world [of project management] feels a bit more staid and traditional if you think of railways and construction, and that side of things. It all still feels a bit male. You haven't got a female leading Network Rail or Transport for London (TfL). When environments are very male, they don't understand how bad they look if you're female. If you go into a training centre and all the pictures are of men and you're female, obviously that's not quite working. Ditto for ethnic minorities, obviously.

Q What are your reflections from your time on the board of Crossrail?

A The thing I remember clearly from that era was that we had a risk

register, but I was always looking at it and thinking, actually, are these real? You know, there are 500 risks – what does anybody ever really think about them? I'm always keen on a risk register with five strategic risks that you can touch and feel and get your head around. And in Crossrail's case, they had a risk register of roughly 100 items but it wasn't connected to Network Rail's risk register and TfL's risk register. I said, "For goodness' sake, these risks need to be aligned." Anyway, that did happen, but it didn't seem to be obvious to people that it needed to happen, which I found odd.

Q Why is it so hard for long-term infrastructure projects to secure government backing, and what should be done about it?

A We seem to be so bad at committing to long-term infrastructure plans in this country that have to go across parliaments. Not enough is being done about thinking about the wider social and environmental impacts, which I hope

When people talk about restructuring the Lords and the Commons, I would be quite interested in some relationship between them where the Lords owned the longer-term plan

the Treasury is beginning to get better at. But you know, who is one to judge what a right and a wrong project is? But I do think we desperately need a long-term direction of travel, particularly on airports. We set up the Airports Commission to decide what we were doing, but then we've essentially not been doing what it recommended for 10 years now – we just seem to be incapable of taking that long view.

When people talk about restructuring the Lords and the Commons, I would be quite interested in some relationship between them where the Lords owned the longer-term plan, so you could have some 20-year plans on housing, education, whatever, which would need to go across parliaments, whereas the Commons is doing all the political infighting and their day-to-day stuff.

Listen to APM Podcast's interview with Baroness Valentine on Apple Podcasts, Spotify or Google Podcasts

5 lessons learned

Rachel Baldwin

The BBC's Head of Programme and Project Delivery for broadcast and end-user technology



What are your most important project lessons?

1 Be clear on your project's 'why'.

Identify and define benefits, assign owners and write a pithy sentence or two about the benefits of your project. Add them to steering group papers and other key documents as a reminder of the big picture. This keeps everyone focused on why we're all working so hard to deliver.

2 Be clear on your project's 'what'.

Gathering requirements is key: great business analysis gets to the heart of what's needed and provides solid foundations for a project's scope. It's all too easy to be pressured into jumping for premature solutions. Resist!

3 Be deliberate about 'how' you'll manage a project.

Choose the right tool for the right job. Is agile, waterfall or lean methodology best for the challenge

at hand? Agile is not just for software development – it's great for any project where you're clear on outcomes but unsure of how to get there. Test new ways of working with a pilot group. Test, learn, adapt. Rethink what fails. Scale what works.

4 Engage, listen and adapt.

Change management is not 'comms': this may sound obvious, but professional change managers are central to successful project delivery. Develop integrated change and engagement plans. Engage, listen and adapt plans in light of what you hear.

5 Celebrate and communicate success.

Demonstrate the outcomes and benefits your project/programme has delivered. Go back to the pithy 'why' that you wrote at the start. If you succeeded in delivering those benefits, it's time to celebrate!

Read Rachel Baldwin's Big Interview on page 24

Myth buster: Change management



The myth that change management and project management are one and the same thing can be confusing. Projects enable change, and "change is an established part of life, especially in modern organisational contexts, and is often needed to ensure continued survival or business relevance," explains the *APM Body of Knowledge 7th edition*. The book defines change management as "the overarching approach taken in an organisation to move from

the current to a future desirable state, using a coordinated and structured approach in collaboration with stakeholders. The change management process links strategy with execution, and deployment with operation and the ultimate realisation of the expected benefits." Organisational change is typically implemented into corporate settings through project work. However that is only the beginning of the process of embedding change.

Comment

Why we are trailing behind in the gender pay gap

Rachel Jackson, Lead Planner at Anglo American and member of APM's Women's SIG, finds cause for outrage – and optimism



In November 2023, tens of thousands of Icelandic women, including the prime minister, protested against gender inequality. In Iceland women still trail behind men in terms of pay despite equal pay rules and in a country considered to be a 'feminist paradise'. Its pay gap stood at 10.2% in 2021. The causes of the gender pay gap are complex and overlapping.

Women do more unpaid work

On average, women do more unpaid work such as childcare, which reduces their capacity to work full time. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported in March 2022 that in the UK employed women living with dependent children spent more time on unpaid childcare (an average of 84 minutes per day) than their male counterparts (an average of 55 minutes per day).

Women are also more likely to have a career break influenced by care and family responsibilities. Employment rates released by the ONS report that fathers are more likely to be in employment regardless of age. The rates for mothers vary – this could be attributed to it being easier for parents to enter the workforce as their children get older and attend school. Women whose youngest dependent child was aged between one and eight years were more likely to not be in employment or to be in part-time employment than to be in full-time employment.

More women work in low-paid sectors

There is an over-representation of women in relatively low-paying sectors. Women hold 77% of jobs in the health and social work sector and 70% of jobs in education. Sectors

where only a small proportion of jobs are held by women include construction (16%) and transportation and storage (26%). In addition to there being an imbalance of women in lower-paying sectors, women hold fewer senior positions. A higher share of men than women were working as managers, directors or senior officials, with on average 13%



The gender pay gap is decreasing across all major occupational groups. However, progress has been slow

of men in these roles compared with 8% of women.

The gender pay gap is decreasing across all major occupational groups. However, progress has been slow. Over the past decade it has fallen by approximately a quarter among full-time employees and, in April 2023, the ONS reported that the average gender pay gap stood at 7.7%.

Project management pay

The gender pay gap within project management remains at 24%, according to the *APM Salary and*

Market Trends Survey 2023 research report. The project profession is significantly behind the average gender pay gap in the UK. The APM research report highlights positive shifts in gender equality within roles, so while there is cause for outrage there is also cause for optimism.

Projects face a considerable challenge to reduce the pay gap, but the very nature of projects does not conventionally lend itself to the implementation of long-term strategies, the kinds of which are required to address the pay gap. Hurdles such as limited durations of projects hinder development and internal promotion. Projects are often delivered by numerous organisations, e.g. alliances, joint ventures etc., which presents a challenge when comparing pay levels of project personnel, implementing policies to tackle recruitment in lower-paid roles and comparing performance imbalances. Project environments and working hours often have the potential to impact flexibility to support employees with caring responsibilities.

Project people are perfectly placed to solve this

Project professionals are in the business of resolving problems and so are ideally suited to ask the candid questions and navigate the hurdles impeding progress on the gender pay gap. We can only gain from a more diverse workforce. Collectively we need to use our skills to overcome these challenges and to start leading from the front.

To download the *APM Salary and Market Trends Survey 2023*, visit apm.org.uk/project-management-salary-survey

Is programme management keeping up with gigaprojects?

Sue Kershaw, APM President and Senior Vice President at AECOM, on why the time is up for project management by numbers



As we move from megaprojects to gigaprojects around the world, are we equipping ourselves to deliver them effectively? Will teraprojects be next? And how will we deal with their complexity? The value of gigaprojects is in the dozens and sometimes hundreds of billions of pounds/dollars, and their complexity is immense, as we see for example in Neom, AlUla and Diriyah, to name but three of many in one kingdom, Saudi Arabia.

Gigaprojects are forming everywhere, from Hong Kong to the UK, and across all sectors: terrestrial transport; aviation; place building; water; power; and the environment. They will form the world that future generations will enjoy, thrive in and prosper in. Can we afford the risk of failure on a gargantuan scale because we are being complacent in our thinking? Will our processes such as governance, risk management, project controls and stakeholder management cope?

Programme management

And are we being complacent, just refreshing our processes and honing artificial intelligence to allow for thinking time and a liberated cohort of professionals? Can complexity and scale be broken down into subcomponents, then joined up again to create the whole?

We have lots of questions to answer. We need to think differently and be more intellectually challenged and curious. We need to develop a philosophy of programme management that is based on academic data and research.

Philosophy is a systemic study of fundamental questions on topics such as existence and the mind. More widely it is a rational and critical inquiry

into existing assumptions. Surely the gigaprojects and teraprojects deserve this approach.

Dr Juliano Denicol of University College London (UCL) is a trailblazer on this thinking, with research projects at UCL's Megaproject Delivery Centre in the Bartlett School of Sustainable Construction. This is evidenced in his award-winning report on why projects



Can we afford the risk of failure on a gargantuan scale because we are being complacent in our thinking?

fail: *What Are the Causes and Cures of Poor Megaproject Performance?* (2020). Using rigorous data capture techniques, the research team identified 18 reasons for failure and 54 solutions to prevent failure. These were further honed into six themes, to give us the basis of how to improve and ensure successful delivery of clients' programmes:

- 1 Decision-making behaviour**
- 2 Strategy governance and procurement**
- 3 Risk and uncertainty**
- 4 Leadership and capable teams**
- 5 Stakeholder engagement and management**
- 6 Supply chain integration and coordination**

Addressing these themes will go a long way in assuring the delivery of gigaprojects and teraprojects.

This work is also pushing us to look beyond a group of projects and to analyse what is around the issues that give the bigger picture and the richer outcome. These are issues like net zero, environmental, social and corporate governance, sustainability and social value. These are the glue of truly successful programmes. They also appeal greatly to investors who want to spend their money wisely.

No projects by numbers

The outcomes of programmes are more than the sum of their parts, and they grow to provide more value to the communities and geographies they serve. In time, the programme is almost forgotten and its job as a catalyst for change is complete.

Where can this be learned? UCL's MBA in Major Infrastructure Delivery is a good starting point, especially for those who want a seat among the future C-suite of their organisations. Professional associations, and enlightened programme management houses, have a key role in advocating for a more scientific approach to programme management, as evidenced by APM's efforts in recent years.

We need to help our clients understand that this philosophy will give them the outcome they need, rather than project management by numbers that at best provides a scattergun approach and minimal success. Using this thinking we can take programme management to a new level. Join the movement now, celebrate a renaissance in programme management, and share your thinking!

Comment

Carbon reduction leaders

Godawatte Arachhige Gimhan Rathnagee Godawatte and Eduardo Navarro Bringas, both at the School of Energy, Geoscience, Infrastructure and Society at Heriot-Watt University, give a taste of their new APM research report



We interviewed 17 experienced project professionals on how their role could be reshaped when planning and delivering major projects and programmes with carbon reduction as a target deliverable. They revealed interesting yet contrasting views. While the status quo views project professionals as managing established targets with a limited influence on carbon performance goals, there is an emerging perspective on the profession's potential to significantly influence carbon outcomes in projects.

Project professionals often recognise their limited ability to shape a major project's priorities and scope, particularly over carbon reduction goals and targets because their involvement is often limited during inception phases. This leads to a perceived diminished role in achieving low-carbon performance within projects. This results in a tendency to prioritise traditional project metrics over carbon-related ones. As one of the interviewees stated: "There is no way the contractors or project managers [can be] leading it, because it has to be led by the client."

In contrast, sponsor representatives viewed project professionals' potential to drive carbon reduction in projects positively, but it requires a cultural shift within project organisations (including sponsors themselves) to empower and equip project professionals with the knowledge and skills to challenge supply chains and improve the carbon reduction capacity.

Influencing carbon performance

This alternative vision positions project professionals not simply as managers, but as leaders who can influence and challenge carbon performance within projects. They are seen as crucial intermediaries between sponsors and technical professionals, capable of driving change in projects and innovation in terms of carbon reduction within projects.

Some of the project professionals we interviewed have embraced this leadership role, advocating for change and leading low-carbon project delivery proposals. However, they also recognise that this role requires further involvement during the early stages of major projects.

As one professional said: "It all depends on these early discussions."

Leading by example

A best practice example of this would be the HS2 project, which has implemented several key strategies to attain carbon reduction targets since the early stages of the project. For example:

1 The use of a standardised carbon assessment method has been implemented, contributing to the establishment of current industry standards for carbon management and reporting.

2 Carbon reduction targets were embedded in contracts with the supply chain.

3 Introducing a formal programme of continuing professional development that includes carbon literacy and skills development in collaboration with the Carbon Literacy Project.

HS2 is a pivotal project in which carbon reduction targets have been elevated as a crucial parameter for the project's success. By employing robust methodologies, sharing knowledge and integrating carbon requirements into contracts and professional development, HS2 sets a notable example for carbon reduction in major projects. There is an emerging consensus that for project professionals to effectively contribute to carbon reduction goals, they need to be empowered to take on a leadership role, starting from early contributions at a project's inception.



Download *Are We Ready for Net-Zero in Project Management? The Challenges and Strategies for Project Professionals in the Delivery of Low-Carbon Major Projects at* apm.org.uk/resources/research

Modular nuclear reactors: the future of clean energy?

Carol Tansley, Vice President of UK New Build Projects at X-energy, outlines seven benefits of small and advanced modular reactors



In January, the UK Government published its *Civil Nuclear Roadmap*, described as the “biggest expansion of nuclear power in the UK for 70 years”. This envisages delivery of up to 24GW (gigawatts) of clean energy from nuclear power by 2050 through large-scale reactors and small and advanced modular reactors (SMRs and AMRs). So what are SMRs and AMRs and what benefits can they bring?

SMRs are defined as nuclear reactors delivering 300MW (megawatts) or less of electric power. AMRs have equivalent power outputs but because of their advanced fuel type can also deliver high temperature heat and steam to help decarbonise heavy industrial processes and support the manufacture of hydrogen and clean fuels for aviation. As well as providing stable, reliable baseload electricity, certain AMRs can also ‘load follow’ to complement power from renewable energy sources (solar and wind) and keep the electricity grid stable.

The key benefits of SMRs and AMRs are:

1 Scalability. With SMRs and AMRs, the number of reactor modules required for each power plant can be scaled to meet local needs. For example, X-energy’s Xe-100 reactor (pictured) can be deployed as individual units, e.g. for a small, remote community or industrial facility, or as, say, a four-unit plant to service an industrial cluster, such as on Teesside or Humberside, to help power and decarbonise several industrial facilities.

2 Flexibility. The small land footprint of these SMRs and AMRs

means they can be sited close to the point of need and in locations that would not be suitable for large-scale reactors. Accompanying the government’s roadmap is a consultation process for a revised siting strategy for new nuclear plants. This is specifically designed to

support the rollout of SMRs and AMRs across the UK.

3 Accelerated returns. The modular delivery approach has the benefit that, as each individual reactor is commissioned, it can be brought

into commercial operation. This delivers outputs for end users and financial returns for customers and investors as soon as each module is ready, rather than when the entire project is complete. Thus, the early returns from the first module could be used to finance later

modules, reducing the overall costs of capital for the project.

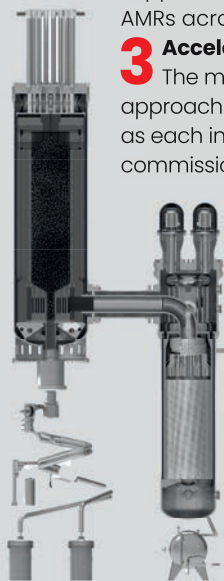
4 Reduced novelty. One of the key design principles of SMRs and AMRs is to maximise the use of widely available, commercial, off-the-shelf components. This minimises the number of bespoke, first-of-a-kind components requiring specialist manufacture. This reduces the risks associated with use of novel components and widens the pool of potential suppliers, creating greater supply chain resilience and reducing costs through competitive pricing.

5 More efficient construction. SMRs and AMRs are designed

using modularised manufacturing techniques, i.e. they are made up of separate sections that are then locked together, essentially like nuclear reactor Lego. The modularised components are prefabricated in factories and transported to site for assembly. As well as bringing benefits of standardisation and replicability, this approach minimises time on site. As most of the project is delivered in a controlled environment and not subject to disruption caused by weather conditions, this leads to greater productivity and more efficient construction.

6 Economies of multiples. With their smaller, simpler designs and reduced complexity, these SMRs and AMRs are easier, quicker and cheaper to construct than the larger reactors. Delivered as part of a series, they derive efficiencies through replication and learning-by-doing, making each additional unit faster and cheaper to deliver than the last, resulting in economies of multiples rather than economies of scale.

7 Greater predictability. Together, the reduced complexity in the design and construction requirements, the reduced novelty in components and the increased efficiency in construction methods lead to greater schedule and cost predictability. This creates greater business-case and return-on-investment certainty, making investment in nuclear power plant projects more attractive for customers and investors.



Read our cover feature, which tells the story of a world-first project to decommission a nuclear fusion plant, on page 18

APM Trustee

Why AI is a revolution in the making

James White, Head of Nuclear at MIGSO-PCUBED, on the role of artificial intelligence in enhancing efficiency and predictive accuracy



Artificial intelligence (AI) is revolutionising the field of project management. It's not merely about automating tasks or replacing human effort. Rather, AI is enhancing human capabilities, enabling project managers to achieve unprecedented levels of efficiency and effectiveness. The core strength of AI in this context lies in its ability to meticulously process and analyse large volumes of complex data, learn from it and offer insights that might be elusive to human analysis.

One of the most compelling applications of AI in project management is its capacity to analyse historical project data. This analysis is not just a superficial review of past outcomes, but a deep, pattern-based investigation that reveals underlying trends, potential risks and opportunities. By doing so, AI equips project managers with the foresight to take proactive measures, ensuring better preparedness for future challenges.

In complex and large-scale projects, such as those undertaken by Rolls-Royce in aerospace or Transport for London in urban infrastructure, the ability to predict and mitigate risks is invaluable. These organisations handle projects characterised by a high degree of complexity, numerous variables and significant uncertainties. The lessons learned from such large-scale programmes are a treasure trove of data for AI systems. By feeding this data into AI models, project managers can gain insights into risk factors, success criteria and potential bottlenecks.

The predictive prowess of AI becomes even more critical in sectors like construction,

aerospace or IT, where adhering to tight timelines and budgets is paramount. For instance, in the aerospace industry, AI can forecast issues in project execution, supply chain logistics or compliance with regulatory standards. Similarly, in urban transport projects, AI can predict traffic impacts, infrastructure wear and tear and optimal scheduling to minimise disruption and maximise efficiency.



AI equips project managers with the foresight to take proactive measures

The journey towards integrating AI into project management involves several key steps:

- 1 Data strategy development.** Before AI can be effectively utilised, organisations must develop a comprehensive data strategy. This involves collecting, storing and managing data in a way that makes it accessible and useful for AI applications.
- 2 Tool selection and integration.** Choosing the right AI tools is crucial. These tools should integrate seamlessly with existing project management systems.

3 Training and change management. Implementing AI requires not just technological change but also a cultural shift within organisations to an AI-ready culture.

4 Ethical and responsible use. As AI becomes more pervasive in project management, ethical considerations, such as data privacy, bias in AI algorithms and transparency, become increasingly important.

5 Continuous learning and adaptation. Organisations must be prepared to continuously learn and adapt their AI strategies as new technologies and methodologies emerge. This is a key factor in being at the front of the AI maturity curve rather than reactive and behind the curve – the difference between the two has huge cost and time considerations.

AI's capabilities in predictive analytics and process automation are setting the stage for a revolutionary shift in how projects are conceived, executed and monitored. As we venture further into this journey, it is crucial to adopt a strategy for AI that is ethical, responsible and aims to augment human expertise rather than supplant it. This approach becomes even more significant when considering the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Integrating AI in project management should align with these global objectives, focusing on promoting sustainable economic growth, fostering innovation and ensuring responsible consumption and production patterns. By doing so, we can ensure that AI not only advances the field of project management but also contributes positively to broader societal and environmental goals.

Professor Adam Boddison OBE

Promoting ChPP as the expected global standard

APM's Chief Executive shares the association's international strategic ambitions



Part of APM's five-year strategy

is for Chartered Project Professional (ChPP) to become the expected global standard. The purpose of this strategic intent is to ensure that competent project professionals are delivering projects on time, within budget, to the required specification and with the intended benefits.

We already know that ChPP is gaining traction as the expected standard, but I would like to share more about APM's international ambitions.

International relationships

The global aspect of our strategic ambition for ChPP should not be underestimated. There are well-established competitors operating overseas both nationally and multinationally and APM will need to collaborate rather than compete to be successful. Fortunately, we have excellent international relationships to build on, and given that APM is the only chartered membership association for the project profession in the world, we have a highly sought-after unique selling point too.

APM already has a branch in Hong Kong and in 2023 we launched a branch in the Channel Islands. We intend to set up two more international branches in 2024/25. APM also has relationships with counterparts in other countries, such as the Australian Institute of Project Management. We are regularly approached by associations in other countries to partner with them.

APM is the most mature member of IPMA (the International Project Management Association), which gives us direct access to the project profession in around 70 countries. Discussions are already

under way with IPMA about how we can develop our relationship and help ChPP become the expected global standard. As an international organisation, APM is already a global player, but what comes next to accelerate our progress?

All roads lead to... ChPP

One thing APM will be doing this year is ensuring that all roads can lead to ChPP. It is fair to say that ChPP will not appeal to, or even be relevant in, every country. However, there is

APM's new pathway answers the demand from the project profession and from industry to accelerate the pace at which the ChPP standard is becoming embedded. The pathway will enable more project and programme professionals to attain this highly regarded standard. For example, APM itself intends to apply for recognised assessment of its flagship qualification, the APM Project Management Qualification, under this pathway. And we expect that other global organisations such



The ChPP standard has the potential to unite project and programme management associations internationally behind a common cause

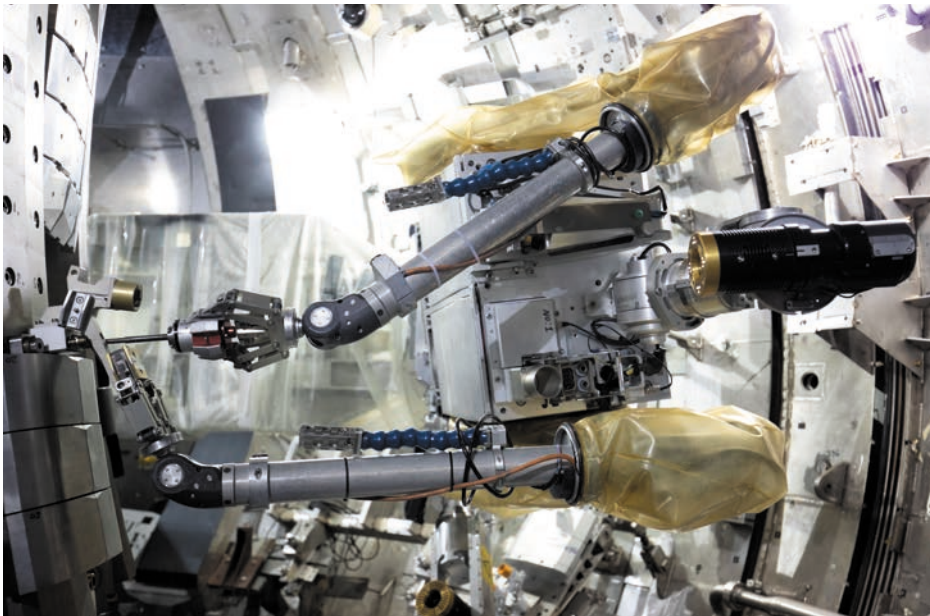
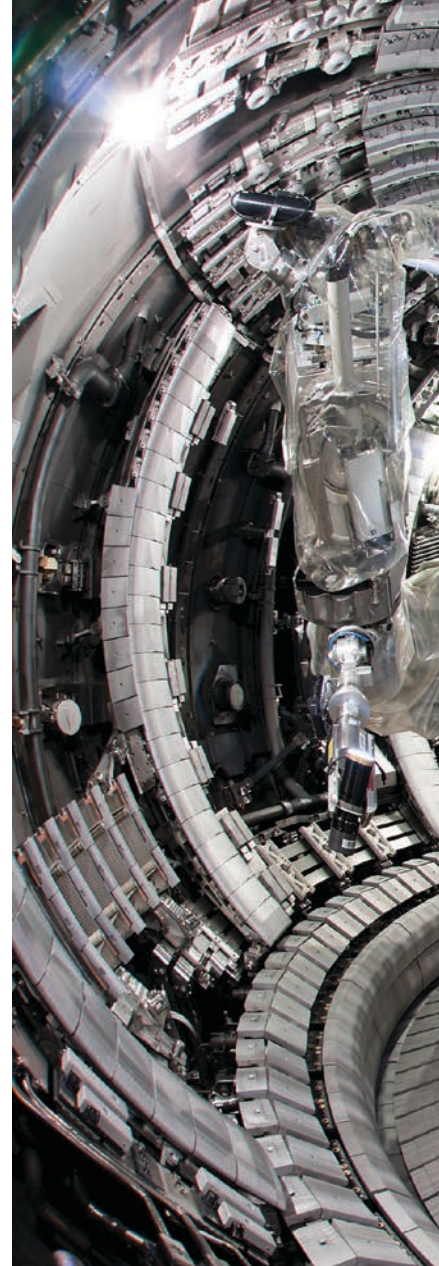
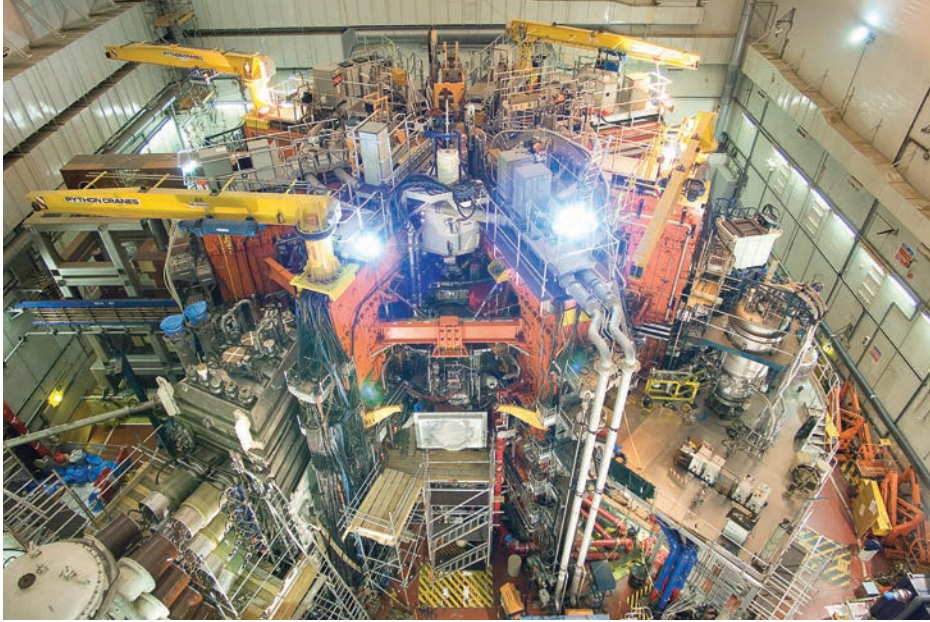
significant international demand for ChPP, not least from current and former Commonwealth countries where Royal Chartership is typically held in high regard.

APM already has three well-established routes to ChPP. In January we announced they would become named pathways with one further pathway to be added in September 2024. The new pathway will recognise validated professional practice built globally through qualifications and experiences in organisations across the profession. The new pathway will help APM to provide a greater diversity of starting points reflecting the breadth and complexity of the project profession, while maintaining the rigour and requirements of the ChPP application process.

as the Project Management Institute will want to apply for recognised assessment under this pathway too.

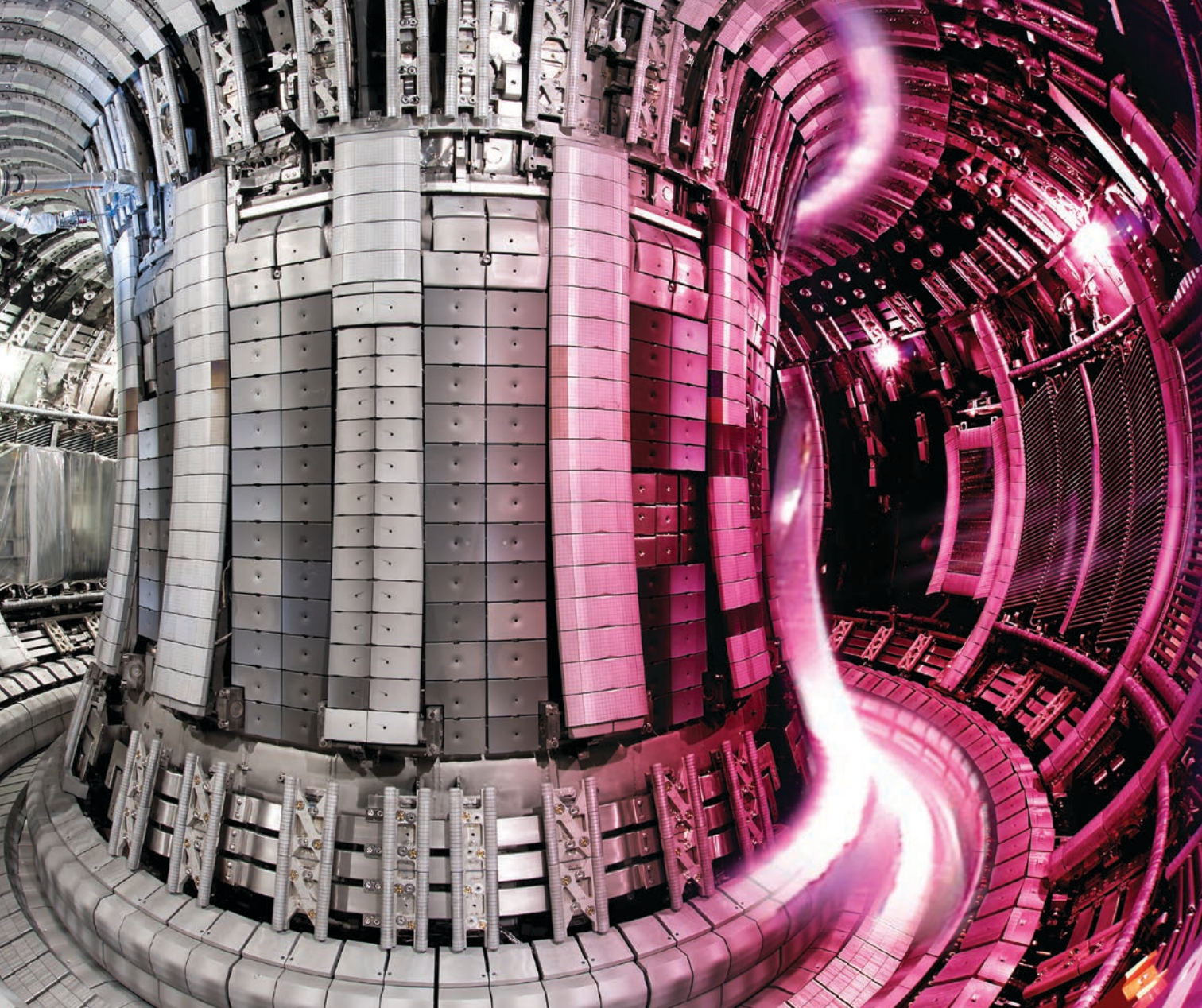
A common cause

The ChPP standard has the potential to unite project and programme management associations internationally behind a common cause. While we may be multiple organisations, we represent one profession, so we should collaborate where it makes sense to do so. In an increasingly complex world facing a series of existential challenges, project professionals will increasingly play a vital role in developing and delivering the solutions. International collaboration for organisations across the project profession is not just a nice-to-have, it is essential.



A world first: **decommissioning a nuclear fusion machine**

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO EMBARK ON A PROGRAMME THAT COULD HELP CHANGE THE FACE OF GREEN ENERGY FOREVER? EMMA DE VITA REPORTS



A nondescript business park just outside Oxford isn't what necessarily springs to mind when you picture the site of some of the world's most exciting nuclear fusion experiments. But Culham Campus is home of the Joint European Torus (JET), which over its four-decade life achieved the world's first controlled release of fusion energy among many landmark experiments. Its fusion machine – or tokamak – has housed the hottest temperatures in the entire Solar System (yes, even hotter than the sun) in its quest to research fusion as a stable net-zero energy source. The prize is worth it.

“Sometime in the next decade or two, we are going to build the first commercial fusion reactor and then humans are going to spend the next 10 million years building

better fusion reactors because fusion is really just an amazing energy source,” Philippe Larochelle, part of Bill Gates's Breakthrough Energy Ventures team, told the *Financial Times*. “The fuel is infinite, carbon free and extremely cheap... you can build it anywhere and scale infinitely.”

Nuclear fusion, unlike fission, works by fusing together the nuclei of deuterium and tritium at extraordinarily high temperatures, expelling neutrons and thereby releasing energy. Deuterium is found in seawater, and the waste produced from the process is much lower grade and far less radioactive than waste from nuclear fission reactors. The technology is at the research stage, but excitement is building as breakthroughs happen, and international investment is accelerating in a nascent private sector start-up scene.

Interest in fusion is hotting up

The UK government announced its domestic £650m Fusion Futures programme in October 2023. The programme includes investment for the building of STEP (Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production), a prototype fusion power plant in Nottinghamshire due to be online by 2040; the expansion of fusion training programmes, with businesses and universities to invest in more than 2,200 people by 2028; and a £50m investment into the Culham Campus (where JET is based) to grow its cluster of fusion start-ups. It has also reiterated its openness to collaborate with the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) in France.

Culham Campus is run by the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA).

JET's foundation stone was laid in 1979, and its final experiment – pulse number 105,842 – was run on 18 December 2023 after four decades of plasma experiments that began on 25 June 1983. JET has always been an international project and since 2014 has been the leading light of a EUROfusion consortium that includes laboratories and facilities in 26 nations.

With JET's final experiment having taken place, what lies ahead is – in project management terms – an equally world-leading programme. That is to manage the first decommissioning of a nuclear fusion energy facility at this scale anywhere. The world's eyes will be on it until 2040, when the programme is due to complete. Part of its mission is to gather data to inform how future machines and power plants can be engineered in a financially and environmentally sustainable manner. This research will feed directly into the development of STEP.

“I love the complexity, the engineering, the technology... There's nowhere else doing what we're doing on this scale”

What will the JET Decommissioning and Repurposing (JDR) programme encompass? Not only will JET need to be disassembled robotically and its tritium recovered and recycled, but its hazardous material will need to be reduced to a minimal level and disposed of. JET's £1bn worth of physical assets will need to be unlocked (the machine was always built to be disassembled).

“This work, along with all of the other various projects within JDR, will be significant in demonstrating the

sustainability of fusion throughout a machine's life cycle, and that is essential in bringing fusion to the market,” said Professor Sir Ian Chapman, CEO of UKAEA, who was present in JET's packed control room to watch the final experiment. It was an emotional moment for all of those involved in its long history.

A ghost control room

Now, the control room stands empty, frozen in time as computer screens are kept on while the systems continue to run. It's eerily quiet. On one desk stands a pirate flag at half-mast. Elsewhere a life-size JET tokamak replica is being used for testing the remote robotic systems being developed in-house to assist with disassembly. From the outside, the tokamak itself looks like the huge 1980s-designed machine that it is. Its industrial-looking, riveted and pipe-covered exterior is no shiny space-age construction. It's mind-blowing to think of the genuinely awesome scientific achievements that happened inside.

The focus of the JDR programme is on “value generation and capture”. This means repurposing assets for use within UKAEA or third parties; recovering tritium for use as fuel in other fusion machines; and developing skills and knowledge to put the UK at the forefront internationally of fusion decommissioning (see box). The programme is split into four work strands:

- 1 Handling.** This involves the decommissioning and handling of components and assemblies from their installed locations to a point of handover for waste processing or repurposing.
- 2 Waste.** This is the processing of waste materials from the point of handover to the point of consignment and transport.
- 3 Buildings.** This will include the de-planting, clearing and repurposing of auxiliary buildings and land for future development and occupancy within Culham Campus.
- 4 Equipment.** This will mean the preparation of repurposing strategy, and agreements for buildings and assets.



JDR programme's objectives

- To discharge the UK's liability for JET decommissioning in a cost-effective manner, using innovative cost-saving methods and reducing nuclear hazard. To minimise waste streams and maximise tritium recovery.
- To develop, implement and prove new technologies to position the UK for future international markets.
- To repurpose JET facilities for UK science and innovation where there is a clear case to do so. Enable the growth of the fusion cluster by regenerating land released from JET.
- To retain and build on the key UK skills base gained through hosting and operating JET, including within the supply chain.



WILL ANLOT

Steve Gilligan

Lead and learn

One of the key project leaders responsible for overseeing all of this is Steve Gilligan, Head of JET Decommissioning and Handling. He started work in remote handling at JET in 2003, ended up at ITER in 2008 for eight years and has been involved in fusion for 20 years.

“I love the complexity, the engineering, the technology – it’s all cutting edge. There’s nowhere else in the world doing what we’re doing on this scale,” he says. The JDR programme, he explains, is being used as a “lead and learn” site for the global fusion community to work out what will be the best approach to fusion decommissioning.

“Just because the science has ended doesn’t mean JET has. We’re still going to learn a lot from it”

“Just because the science has ended doesn’t mean JET has. We’re still going to learn a lot from it,” Gilligan explains.

His responsibilities include all the interior and exterior decommissioning of the tokamak and the plant, and the minimisation of waste and its removal. “Managing the team is complex because there are interfaces across all of that scope,” he says. This year, he leads a team of 140 full-time employees, who are focused on the preparation, planning and feasibility studies for new capabilities. Next year, the team will grow to around 250. “It’s a big multidisciplinary team comprising project controls, engineers, mechanical software and procurement. Most of the systems that we build, particularly for remote handling, we build in-house, so we’ve got our own technicians and operations teams,” he says.

The remote handling systems (mechanical and robotic) will be used to remove 3,774 individual irradiated pieces from inside the tokamak, comprising

tiles and smaller components weighing 1kg–20kg, as well as larger structures of up to 350kg. Then there are tens of thousands of other items from other areas. “We’re investing the time upfront to do a thorough engineering process, establish the project management governance and do detailed planning to enable us to control the work,” Gilligan explains.

Another strand of his responsibilities is working with UKAEA on its broad programme redeploying the few hundred people who worked on JET’s operations until the end of last year. “A number of those resources have transitioned already onto other UKAEA programmes, and a number of them are now integrating into the [JDR] programme... Because they’re so familiar with JET, they will help manage the decommissioning of it,” he says. Then there are the technicians involved in the planning and execution of the decommissioning; the system owners; and the physicists and scientists from all around the world, who will be used as subject matter experts or consultants.

Making the unknown work

It's uncharted territory. "The UKAEA and the wider fusion industry has never decommissioned a facility like this, so the learning that we'll get from it is really important. It's not just the technical side of things – about remote handling or decontamination waste processing that we've got to develop and perform on a large scale – but it's how you organise, how you set out your structures, your governance, the various teams involved and how they interact," Gilligan says.

What kind of project culture does he cultivate? "We've got a team here that is not just multidisciplinary, it's multinational. Different people bring different things to the programme. It's trying to make sure that the culture is collaborative, respectful and plays to people's strengths," he says.

Gilligan likes to be in the thick of it, alongside his team. "If I had to move to sit with the management team rather than being on the shop floor, I would struggle," he admits. "Even with the responsibilities I have, I need to be with the team, listening and understanding the environment that they're working in, and the only way to do that is actually to be with the team. If you're somebody who just parachutes in once a week or sends emails, you don't build that relationship," he reflects.

Working on the very first project

One of Gilligan's team is Verity Armstrong, a Project Manager in sample retrieval, who is working on one of the first projects within the JDR programme and manages a team of around 20 engineers and operators. A trained engineer turned project professional, she was working with the EDF defuelling team as they prepared to decommission their advanced graphite reactors when she decided she wanted to pursue a career in the nuclear industry.

"A nuclear power plant is a wonderful application of all the science you learn about at school; you've got this big interconnected system that somehow functions," she says. "It's absolutely fascinating." Her motivation goes beyond an intellectual interest; it's also about working against climate change.

"I thought I'd end up working in solar or wind energy, but nuclear is where I've ended up and I wouldn't have it any other way"

"Nuclear power is one of the only proven, sustainable technologies that produces a stable base load. I've always wanted to work in sustainable energy. I thought I'd end up working in solar or wind energy, but nuclear is where I've ended up and I wouldn't have it any other way," she says.

The scope of Armstrong's project is to manage the removal of approximately 60 components from inside JET, which will be processed into materials samples that can be analysed by UKAEA and external companies. The tokamak's interior walls are covered in tiles made from tungsten and beryllium that have been exposed to plasma over many years. "We want to take them out and work out what they're like now," explains Armstrong. "Fusion produces far less radioactive waste than fission, but it still produces some, especially on the inner walls of the torus that have had the most contact with the plasma. Following our recent experiment, the components are far more tritiated and activated than they normally would be, so that increases the complexity of the task."

Helping define the programme

Armstrong says that the tiles are of high scientific value: "They're a one-of-a-kind record of how these materials behave in a fusion reactor that has seen years of operational use. It's of great use to future fusion projects, but it's also really important for the rest of the JDR programme. We need to work out the levels of low-level and intermediate-level waste that we have, and then that will

settle our strategy going forward for what sort of waste processing facilities we need."

The biggest challenge for the project is to go live within a certain timeframe – the team wants to get some results by December – but the material processing facilities need upgrading. The logistics of size-reducing the tiles without touching any of the surfaces that the scientists need to analyse, and a shortage of engineers, compound the problems. "We're at the very beginning of this programme and we're the first project, so obviously it takes a bit of time to find your feet. We're still developing some of the programme governance and sample retrieval is really a guinea pig project," she says.

It's this exciting uncertainty that she loves about her role – making order out of chaos. "Being at the start of the new programme where there's lots of uncertainty, and turning that into a scope of work and into a schedule, is what I really enjoy," she says. Working for a public sector organisation with an internationally important legacy is



Verity Armstrong

also rewarding. “It’s nice to know that you’re making a difference, that my project will form the rest of the strategy for decommissioning and that we’ll give some good scientific value to the scientists who are going to go and build ITER and STEP.”

Cutting-edge robotics

Nick Jones also works on the JDR programme as Project Manager for in-vessel decommissioning, which is “essentially size reducing and removing the plasma-facing components inside the JET. Obviously, we can’t send people in there to do that at the moment because of the levels of radiation and tritium, so we have to use remote handling and robotics to do that. Part of my job is providing the engineered systems and the people to be able to do that and then perform the operations.”

The team has completed an R&D programme, which has given direction on what types of technologies they want to develop. “We’re just kicking off the remote in-vessel systems where we’re going to

develop that full capability,” says Jones. “People come to RACE (the UKAEA’s centre for Remote Applications in Challenging Environments) because they’re interested in robotics, automation and remote handling. I may be biased but I think this is one of the more exciting projects here,” he says. “You never quite know what’s around the corner.”

Jones explains that MASCOT is the main robotics tool that they will be using. Its support systems and software have been comprehensively upgraded to be able to deliver decommissioning successfully. It’s a local-remote system, with an operator moving actuators or motors inside the station above their head. The signals from how those motors move are transmitted in real time to the remote actuator, which mirrors exactly what they are doing.

Key to success, Jones believes, is creating an inclusive and supportive environment for the team that supports true risk management: “Whenever we have risk workshops or risk reviews, I say they’re not your risks, they’re our risks – and it’s not how you’re going to deal with it, it’s how are we going to deal with it?”

As Jones’s approach emphasises, the JDR programme is a truly collaborative endeavour, internationally important and critical to the future net-zero energy strategy of the UK. Fusion represents an exciting future of nuclear energy, one that is certainly green and glowing.

“I may be biased but I think this is one of the more exciting projects here. You never quite know what’s around the corner”



UK ATOMIC ENERGY AUTHORITY

Need to know

ITER: The International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor is an international nuclear fusion research and engineering megaproject with the long-term goal of generating electricity. Upon completion of construction of the main reactor and first plasma, planned for late 2025, it will be the world’s largest magnetic confinement plasma physics experiment and the largest experimental tokamak nuclear fusion reactor. It is being built in southern France.

JET: The Joint European Torus at the Culham Centre for Fusion Energy. It was designed to study fusion in conditions approaching those needed for a power plant. It is the only experiment that can operate with the deuterium-tritium fuel mix that will be used for commercial fusion power.

STEP: The Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production is a UKAEA programme that will demonstrate the ability to generate net electricity from fusion. It will also determine how the plant will be maintained through its operational life and prove the potential for the plant to produce its own fuel. The first phase of the programme is to produce a concept design by 2024. It will be a spherical tokamak, connected to the National Grid and producing net energy, although it is not expected to be a commercially operating plant at this stage.

Tokamak: The tokamak is an experimental machine designed to harness the energy of fusion. Inside a tokamak, the energy produced through the fusion of atoms is absorbed as heat in the walls of the vessel. Just like a conventional power plant, a fusion power plant will use this heat to produce steam and then electricity by way of turbines and generators.

Sources: iter.org, UKAEA, Wikipedia

WILL AMIOT



Nick Jones

Rachel Baldwin

Andrew Saunders meets the BBC's Head of Programme and Project Delivery for broadcast and end-user technology, who started out as a documentary maker travelling the world but hung up her director's hat for an award-winning career in project management

It's a long journey from being an award-winning director of documentaries to project managing the construction and fit-out of a brand new TV studio or the launch of a channel, but this has been the career path of Rachel Baldwin, Head of Programme and Project Delivery at the BBC, over the past couple of decades.

In the noughties she was known as the creator of some of the BBC's top-rated factual shows like *One Life – Pregnant in Two Wombs* and *Mr Trebus' Life of Grime* (the former following the pregnancy of a woman born with two wombs, the latter an oddly compelling docu-soap about a Polish émigré and compulsive hoarder).

Now Baldwin and her 115-strong team are in charge of delivering a huge variety of IT and technology programmes – including a brand-new home for the BBC in Birmingham and creating the largest orchestral recording space in Europe at the new music studios in Stratford, East London, due to open in 2025 (see our feature on page 28). All of them are aimed at helping the UK's century-old national broadcasting institution better fulfil its public service remit.

"I run the largest team of project professionals in the BBC. It's an amazing

organisation with a massive diversity of programmes and projects to run. The joy has been the variety of projects I've been able to manage," Baldwin says.

And despite the apparent gulf between her past career making documentaries and her current role delivering projects, the two disciplines have more in common than you might think, she says.

"What I loved about making films was listening to multiple perspectives and then trying to represent everyone's voice accurately. And I think there is a real parallel between that and what I do now at the BBC. I have to work very closely with our content-making partners, listen to their needs and then work out how we can give them the technology they require to fulfil those needs."

Both roles call for the ability to reconcile multiple and often conflicting viewpoints. "You've got the technology strategy and the technologists' view of what would be best. You've got the user requirements coming in. And I've got the finance people to bear in mind as well. Running a major project is about trying to reach a consensus, and thanks to my documentary-making background I'm



The Big Interview

naturally interested in other people's points of view," she explains.

Her experience of life looking through the camera lens also helps when it comes to winning over the journalists and other creatives whose engagement is crucial to the success of any project, and whose *modus operandi* is to be questioning. "My first-hand experience helps me to understand the pressures the content-making teams are under. Listening to people's concerns and genuinely addressing them is the only way to speed up tech adoption. If you don't do that, they will probably just not pick it up and use it to the extent that you need them to," she says.

It's an inclusive approach, but taking time to listen and learn doesn't mean that hard deadlines are allowed to slip. Take the launch (or rather relaunch) of BBC Three as a terrestrial TV channel in February 2022, after six years of only being available online. "In the two weeks leading up to the on-air date, we had already gone to press with our schedules. Failure was not an option. So we had two straight weeks where every single day every technical change we made had to go right if we were going to make that on-air date. It was terrifying but also exhilarating," she says.

Project management is just as rewarding, and more compatible with life as a parent, she adds. "I did lots of glamorous things as a film-maker. I filmed wildlife in Kenya, I made food programmes in the Caribbean. But even film-making in the UK requires you to be able to drop everything and dash across the country at a moment's notice. Based in London and with small children, I was finding that increasingly difficult," she says.

After one too many middle-of-the-night phone calls, in the mid noughties she decided it was time for a change.

"Making observational documentaries requires you to live someone else's life more than you live your own. As a mother I wanted to live my own life and be with my children," she reflects. So, following a spell as a development executive for an independent production company, in 2009 Baldwin approached her former

CV: RACHEL BALDWIN

2022 Head of Programme and Project Delivery, broadcast and end user technology, BBC

2018 Programme Manager, BBC, global transformation of content production workflows for BBC News

2016 Programme Manager, BBC Three

2013 Senior Project Manager, Digital Production Partnership, BBC

2009 Project Manager, BBC, working on independent production supply and digital implementation

2006 Head of Development, Prospect Pictures (independent TV production company)

1999 TV documentary producer/director, BBC Documentaries, London and Bristol. Credits include *One Life – Pregnant in Two Wombs* and *Mr Trebus' Life of Grime*

"In the two weeks leading up to the on-air date, we had already gone to press with our schedules. Failure was not an option"

boss at the BBC, Anne Morrison, a highly successful TV executive who went on to become the Director of the BBC Academy and then Chair of BAFTA.

"I said I was at a crossroads and wanted something a bit different that would still challenge me," says Baldwin. It was a fortuitous conversation as, at the time, the BBC was starting to ramp up its focus on project management. "Anne asked me to apply for a role as a freelance project manager. She said that I'd need to learn some tools and techniques but that I had all the skills and industry knowledge required for the role."

The learning curve was steep – she well recalls the first time someone asked her to do a Gantt chart: "I didn't know what it was; I had to go away and look it up." Undeterred, she has been working her way up at the BBC ever since and was appointed to her current role in March 2022. "I've really loved learning all the tools and techniques. Now I have a big portfolio of technology to deliver; I oversee about 120 projects a year."



Those projects have included delivering both new kit – such as the high-tech Studio B for *News at Ten* at New Broadcasting House in London, opened in June 2022 – and new processes, such as the four-year programme she spearheaded to transform the global content workflows for all journalists in BBC News. Beginning in 2018, the programme involved 16 discrete digital and technology projects aimed at making it easier to get more BBC content onto multiple platforms and in front of new audiences, while also saving licence-fee payers' money through better tools and processes.

The BBC's unique funding model has come under increasing public and political scrutiny in recent years, with calls for the annual licence fee (which will rise 6.6% to £169.50 in 2024) to be frozen, cut or even scrapped completely and replaced by a Netflix-style subscription fee. The licence fee is up for renewal in



“The BBC leadership really does rate project management as a profession and recognises the need for it”

2027 and is a top priority for new BBC Chair Samir Shah. Baldwin won't be drawn into such speculation but does assert that getting value for money is a top priority for all. “I think everyone within the BBC is very aware of how we are funded. There is a real focus on ensuring that money is well spent. We are constantly trying to maximise the amount of money that ends up on screen,” she says.

Her own team includes some 15 business analysts whose role is to understand how processes can be streamlined and workflows simplified across the BBC. Constraints around budget, schedule and people do make

“The joy has been the variety of projects I've been able to manage”

themselves felt, however, Baldwin admits. “We have to fiercely prioritise what we do. We had six weeks of conversations about next year's budget. We had a list of projects that was at least twice as long as what we could actually afford. There are lots of brilliant ideas but we have to be realistic about how much time and effort they will take.”

Perhaps as a result of the focus on value, the corporation's senior management are highly engaged with the benefits of project management as a discipline, she adds. “The BBC leadership really does rate project management as a profession and recognises the need for it. There are a range of transformation initiatives underway to ensure that we are delivering value for all, and they each have their own technology needs. You need someone to run the budgets for those projects, to provide visibility

on how far we have got and to ensure that they deliver not only on time but also deliver the required outcomes and benefits.”

Qualifications help to reinforce that professional status, she adds. “We often ask our project managers to take the APM Project Professional Qualification. It requires thinking and critical analysis. It's a really robust learning methodology.” And as someone whose early training was not in formal project management disciplines, achieving Chartered Project Professional status has proved advantageous. “The BBC really leaned into that. I and a number of colleagues quickly became chartered. I really value that qualification because it gave me an opportunity to consolidate what I had learned over the years and reflect on the tools and techniques that work best.”

As she has progressed to running a department rather than individual projects, her own focus has changed too. “Now I get the escalations, the hard stuff. Lots of exciting issues to sort out. And I anticipate where things might get sticky. And because projects are temporary entities you're constantly assembling teams. I love to see people building confidence, starting on small-scale projects and then going onto larger ones, developing the ability to really hold a room and bring very senior people together,” she says.

It's all underpinned by a common thread that binds Baldwin and her colleagues together, she concludes.

“I love public service broadcasting and I want to help make the BBC as successful as I can. I have to believe in the mission of any organisation I work for, and the BBC really suits me because it aligns with my values.”

Listen to Rachel's interview with APM Podcast on Apple, Spotify or Google

PARKS AND RE-CREATION

WITH THE 2024 OLYMPICS AND PARALYMPICS JUST MONTHS AWAY, IT'S A GREAT TIME TO ASK: HOW HAS THE LONDON 2012 LEGACY PROJECT FARED? JUDGING BY THE BUZZ AT THE FORMER OLYMPIC PARK, IT'S GETTING THERE, FINDS RICHARD YOUNG



“There is no point in sinking all of this money into East London unless actually it is going to produce a long-term return. We need a complete overview of what on earth we are trying to achieve on the Olympics site and what in the long term this is really all about.”

Boris Johnson was the newly elected Mayor of London in 2008 and was pulling no punches. Legacy, he was saying, was a *sine qua non* for London 2012.

Now that he has more time on his hands, he might want to pop up to Stratford to see how the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park legacy project has fared. Last year saw the opening on the Park's East Bank site of UCL East, a new venue for University College London. This year Sadler's Wells will open a state-of-the-art dance studio complex. The London

College of Fashion (LCF) already has hundreds of stylish students milling about its new unified campus. And next year will see the unveiling of V&A East.

As Paris gears up to host this year's Games, the 2012 legacy project has some critical lessons learned to help the City of Lights avoid being left with white elephant facilities and missed opportunities.

Project lockstep

The first is treating legacy as a programme aligned around a central vision. With so many projects across the Park, the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) has been acting as a *de facto* programme management office (PMO) since just before the Games in 2012. It acts as a supra-borough planning authority. (Since 1 December 2023, the boroughs of Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and



Waltham Forest have taken back control of much of the site.)

LLDC has used its powers to ensure that developers and new tenants contribute to the area in line with the legacy masterplan. “Our job is to make connections between these institutions, so they are talking to people here and each other,” says Rosanna Lawes, LLDC's Executive Director of Development. “In project management terms, it's easy to focus a lot on risk. We try to think through the opportunities in a more strategic way.”

East Bank will make a huge contribution to the cultural legacy for the whole city. But even with a central PMO there are challenges. “It's been a big learning curve for Sadler's Wells, and for me, in terms of project management,” says Charlotte Meyer, Head of Projects and Governance at the dance



Left: Here East, a “dedicated campus, for innovators, disruptors, visionaries and locals”. Above: The Olympic Rings in the north of the Park.

LLDC



Top, centre: A view of the London Stadium and ArcelorMittal Orbit tower. Above: Housing in the Park. Left: One of the Park's green spaces.

“Our job is to make connections between these institutions, so they are talking to people here and each other”

theatre (see box page 30). “Finding the confidence to represent your side of the table and find the compromises needed without undermining your own project at the end – that’s been hard.”

It’s one of the big lessons Lawes takes out of the development. “Investing time up front in those relationships, in building that rapport, building your

goodwill, signing off and being clear about your vision and objectives are crucial,” she says. The projects now coming to fruition started early. UCL East, for example, began as a concept in 2014, and by 2018 the development was sufficiently advanced to require the appointment of an in-house Programme Manager, Kate Higham (since 2022, a Programme Director at Turner & Townsend). “UCL East wasn’t led as an estates programme. It was academically led and driven by a commitment to achieving long-term impact, not only for the university but locally,” she says. “The long-term benefits of East Bank were central to the governance of the programme.” That led to a “really robust monitoring and impact evaluation model,” she adds, within which clear and open reporting was critical.

Culture club

That commitment to build a programme around both infrastructure and culture is illustrated by the appointment of Tamsin Ace as Director of East Bank Partnerships (EBP) in September. She’s a 12-year veteran of the Southbank Centre who’d most recently spent a couple of years as Head of Cultural Programming at key Park tenant LCF. “It’s about showing what collaboration can look like,” she explains. “At LCF, I did a roadshow across the different campuses internally to get buy-in

for the new cultural programme at East Bank. At EBP, it's about making sure we can build, externally, on each other's strengths and that we don't double up resources."

A good example is the way cultural events will feed into each other: the V&A will launch its East Bank site with an exhibition on black British music, a perfect opportunity for LCF and Sadler's to piggy-back with their own programming. It extends outwards, too. EBP's New Talent for Future Leaders programme offers paid internships for people from the four boroughs, helping create firmer links between the new tenants and the community.

EBP is the operational PMO to LLDC's infrastructure one, then. How does Ace hope to deliver? "Transparency, great communication, clarity on the values and the opportunities," she says. "We're really explicit about why we're doing this, who it's for and what we can get out of it – then it's about finding ways to bring partners together to learn from those connections."

That cultural legacy programme exists alongside commercial and residential projects that aim to make the Park both socially and environmentally

"We need to make sure that, in five years, we're all still happy neighbours"

sustainable, a key 2012 Olympic bid commitment. Jo Dobson, now Associate Director at UsefulProjects, was a Sustainability Manager during the delivery phase and now advises other major projects.

"[Sustainability] was embedded in every aspect of the delivery approach, from strategy and briefs, governance and project management processes to culture and behaviours," she says. "The opportunity to transform a badly neglected area really captivated us."

Holding partners to account

The 'raw material' of the Park did pose challenges. Infrastructure designed to optimise transport and security for a global sports extravaganza – such as a wide ring-road around the site – haven't always been helpful for cohesive mixed-use developments. Solving that issue has been central to the planning of sustainable projects.

"[Planning] strategies set out how the partners will deliver upon their commitments to community use, educational outreach and local employment, for example," says Higham. "These, and the governance structures of LLDC, hold partners to account – particularly how local benefits underpin operations for the long term. There has to be a clear plan for translating the programme work into business-as-usual, which was a key part of how the first



phase of the UCL East programme was managed and successfully closed down."

That has meant the major projects function at UCL, for example, has included all the academic departments to ensure risks, dependencies and operational sustainability are coordinated. Sustainability was critical for Sadler's Wells, too. "It's a 200-year lease," says Meyer, "so it's important to build relationships with the communities, to show the benefits for them." That should help meet political sponsors' high demands for the community aspects of the project. "Everyone can get so focused on getting buildings open," says Ace. "We need to make sure that, in five years, we're all still happy neighbours, building on the benefits of sharing this space and opening ourselves up to the community."



SADLER'S BIG MOVE



Charlotte Meyer, Head of Projects and Governance for Sadler's Wells, had been in building services and was

seconded to work on the East Bank development with then project lead (now Executive Director and co-CEO) Britannia Morton. "It became apparent we would need somebody to work on this full time," she says. So Meyer was sponsored through a master's in construction

LLDC



BBC Music studios (top left) and V&A East Storehouse (above) are due to open at East Bank in 2025. Left: London College of Fashion's new building.

Community context

It's not hard to find critics of the legacy programme. In the first years after the bid, the Games' organisers worked hard to sell its social inclusivity. Chair of the London 2012 Organising Committee, Sebastian Coe, for example, promised up to 40,000 new homes, with much of the fresh stock being affordable housing.

In 2022, only around 39% of the 1,200 new homes fell into that category; 65,000 people are on housing waiting lists in the four boroughs. Critics argue property developers have simply gentrified the area.

“We want this to be economically successful, and that has to mean opportunities for local people”

Westfield shopping centre and West Ham Football Club bring in the footfall, but do little for the communities around the Park, they claim. But it doesn't have to be 'either/or', say programme leaders. “Lots of organisations and people come into the Park from outside, and we want to make sure that the benefits of that are enjoyed by local people,” says Lawes. “We want this to be economically successful, and that has to mean opportunities for local people.”

She reels off a list of initiatives to support smaller businesses, with low-cost workspaces and “pathways into the emerging cultural sector” on the Park, supported by outreach projects from East Bank partners. There's a construction skills academy supported by Transport for London, for example. Residential developments at sites such as Hackney Bridge could help address criticisms about affordable housing. Sports facilities are widely used by local clubs and schools.

“We place obligations on those organisations we contract with to make

project management and has been guiding the development ever since. Coming on board early meant she could communicate Sadler's needs for a building suited to dance studios at every stage. “I had a good foundation on how our current buildings work,” she says. “We had a very clear brief and vision that went 10 years back, when Sadler's first started looking for a new venue.”

Working in lockstep with other tenants at East Bank was an

additional challenge. “We have this shared public realm requiring large institutions to make lots of shared decisions,” she says. Having a single planning authority, LLDC, with a masterplan for the development, helped. “In the early days when we were trying to flesh out what East Bank would be and to make it an attractive destination, it was hard. The V&A, UCL, the BBC – we all had our own ways of working. Then on a long programme, you get personnel changes. There's so

much documentation, and working with four or five sets of project teams was hard.”

Sadler's even lost its first design for the building when the masterplan was re-jigged at LLDC – but for Meyer that simply highlighted the value of coordination. “The clearer the brief, the easier the ride,” she says. And her other big tip? “Find people who can devote time to working with both internal and external stakeholders.”



Above: The Park's gardens and open spaces are an attraction in themselves. Right: An aerial view of Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.



sure that they meet local employment targets, including those around diversity, ethnicity and disabilities,” Lawes adds. “We hold them to account for that. We also make sure that, if you’re based on the Park as an employer or a contractor, you’re paying the London living wage.”

Has it worked?

Building continues; the buzz around the Park is impressive. Large tenants are in place at East Bank, creating a cultural critical mass that will continue to bring people into East London. Was it worth the money? Is the project’s balance sheet – with displaced residents and high costs on one side, and new tenants and a wealth of opportunities on the other – in credit?

Lawes is keen to point out that the project is a work in progress. “We’ve completed much of the bricks-and-mortar bit, and we’re still doing that,” she says. “We are already seeing the benefits, but

you’ll really see the socio-economic impact building in the next decade, the next 20 years. It’s that time horizon that you need to have.”

For Dobson, that also means sticking with the original spirit of the bid. “Sustainability wasn’t just a bolt-on or part of the project culture,” she says. “It had to be embedded in business-as-usual. We’re seeing organisations stick by the green targets – and current and future projects in the Park will benefit from new technologies, policies and opportunities.

“We make sure that, if you’re based on the Park as an employer or a contractor, you’re paying the London living wage”

The Park can continue to be about regeneration – not just using less energy, for example, but generating more than they use.”

Lawes is open about future needs – around housing, for example, and the fact Stratford International station remains underdeveloped. But, she insists, the achievements are real. Given the fixed starting point for the legacy project – a global sports complex with huge sunk costs – and the ultra-high expectations, you have to admire their grit. So what’s Lawes’ big lesson learned from more than 20 years working in this part of London? “If you believe in your vision at the outset, you’ll get there provided you’ve got little stepping stones along the way. Hold your nerve.”

LLDC



APM's *FUTURE LIVES AND LANDSCAPES*: WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS

Among project professionals in the arts and culture sector who are currently working on a project intended to deliver a social benefit:

89% expect to deliver at least one similar project in the next five years

59% are confident there will be sufficient project skills to deliver more social value projects in this sector in the next five years

59% think more project professionals are needed to deliver other social value projects at the current time

22% say there are significant skills gaps that would affect delivery of other social value projects in this sector right now

48% say project skills gaps are the biggest risk to projects of this type right now

37% say a lack of project professionals is the biggest risk to projects of this type in the next five years

Find out more



SOURCE: APM, *FUTURE LIVES AND LANDSCAPES*: A SURVEY OF 1,000 PROJECT/PROGRAMME MANAGERS IN THE UK CURRENTLY WORKING ON A PROJECT INTENDED TO DELIVER A SOCIAL BENEFIT, COMMISSIONED BY APM AND CARRIED OUT BY CENSUSWIDE, apm.org.uk/campaign/future-lives-and-landscapes

MAKE DECARBONIS

DAVE WALLER INVESTIGATES HOW PROJECTS ARE REALLY CUTTING THE CARBON

Comprising 14.3 miles of new roads, 50 new bridges and viaducts, and the longest road tunnel in the UK (at 2.6 miles), the proposed Lower Thames Crossing project is all about ambition. If it gets the go-ahead, it will be “the greenest road in the UK”. But before anyone has even grabbed a shovel, it has already broken new ground: by becoming the first project in the country to establish a full carbon baseline.

Two years ago, planning for the Lower Thames Crossing was refused. Its leadership found themselves withdrawing the Development Consent Order (DCO) and having to reapply. But instead of mothballing the project until it was cleared, they chose to take a

step back and actively work on reducing its carbon footprint. That decision had a transformative impact on the project’s credentials.

“We took the mature design from the DCO as an overall

reference and looked at the projected carbon impact of using standard materials like diesel and concrete,” explains Programme Director Shaun Pidcock. “Then we set out to understand and follow the latest industry best practice for decarbonisation. This gave us a new target – which ended up at 30% below the original baseline in terms of carbon.”

A necessary new approach

The Lower Thames Crossing proposals recognise and reflect a new reality for project professionals: the need to adapt to a changing world. On the one hand, that means preparing for the impact of climate change, whether that’s rising temperatures, violent storms, flash floods or human

displacement. On the other, it’s about mitigating that impact, which makes it critical to reduce the amount of carbon entering the atmosphere in the first place.

A new approach to projects is certainly needed. According to UN figures, construction alone is responsible for 37% of global carbon emissions. The sector managed to cut its carbon emissions by 5% between 2020 and 2021. But at the same time, its built output grew by 5%. And it’s not just about construction projects. From transport to defence, energy to IT, organisations across the country are putting strategies in place to decarbonise, many driven by the government’s commitment to hit net zero by 2050.

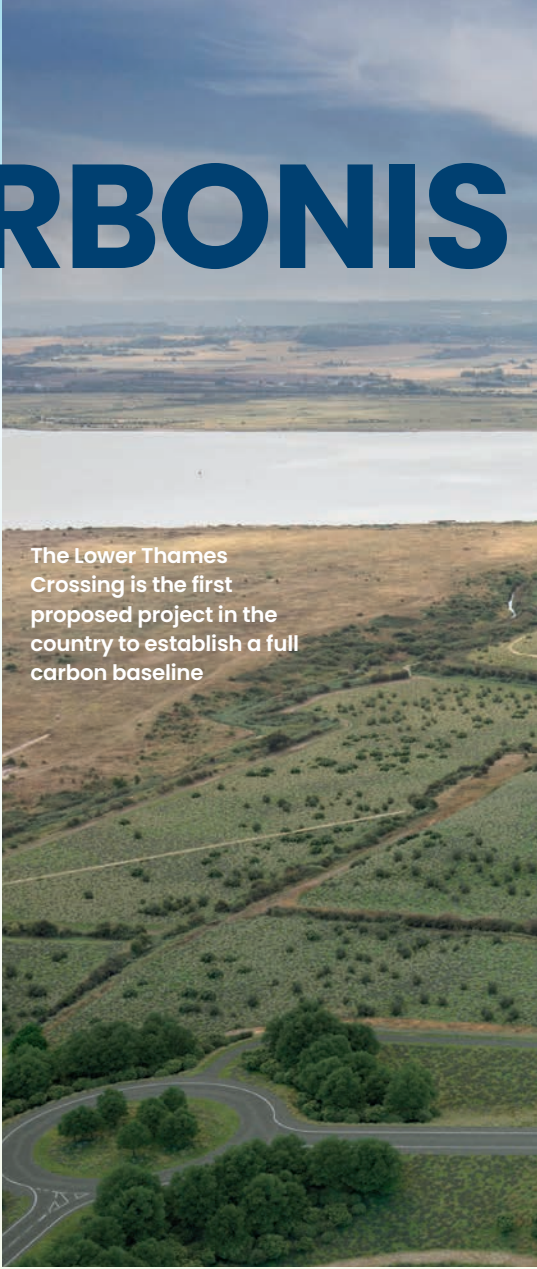
Take HS2, which is currently running an initiative to replace diesel generators and cranes with purpose-built solar panels and fuel cells that can be deployed on its sites. The project is also busy cleaning up its rolling stock by retrofitting electric motors.

It’s about the entire footprint

At the Lower Thames Crossing, meanwhile, the team has taken a similarly pioneering approach to procurement, ensuring that a commitment to decarbonisation is embedded throughout its supply chain. Project leads now have to understand their entire footprint. That means being able to engage with partners in new ways and have conversations that simply weren’t expected just a few years ago.

Pidcock explains how the team shared its 30% carbon benchmark with every bidder and asked them to show how they would hit that ambitious target. They would get bonus points for showing how they’d invest in innovation that could drive carbon out even further.

“We looked for companies that were innovative and clearly corporately



The Lower Thames Crossing is the first proposed project in the country to establish a full carbon baseline

committed to decarbonisation,” says Pidcock, who cites supplies of green hydrogen and low-carbon concrete as examples. “We set aside additional monies as part of our baseline approach, so we can help fund some of that innovation and work it into the design and delivery solutions.”

Baking in carbon commitments

The Lower Thames Crossing team has taken another strong step here: feeding the carbon commitments made in those contracts into the revised DCO, making them a legal requirement for the project so they’re baked in if the leadership changes.



Shaun Pidcock

ATION WORK



“It will become difficult for any future projects not to really consider the carbon at the earliest possible stage,” says Pidcock of the broader changes he’s experienced and helped to shape. “You need committed

delivery partners who want to achieve decarbonisation and be progressive in the industry, rather than just get stuff built.”

But nailing the decarbonisation challenge will require project professionals

to change in other ways, too. Carbon emissions aren’t just about the carbon that

comes out in the course of the project. Take the third runway at Heathrow as an example. When that project was blocked, it wasn’t about the delivery. There wasn’t too much carbon in the building process or runway surface. It was because of the extra carbon that would have been emitted once the asset was in use, thanks to all the additional flights.

Alexander Budzior, Fellow in Management Practice at Saïd Business School, recently explored decarbonisation at a joint APM Benefits and Governance Special Interest Group conference. He argues that project professionals must now engage in what he terms “right-to-left thinking”, considering the full life of

the asset and its emissions from the very beginning.

“As project leaders, we’re not having enough conversations about what happens once we’re finished,” says Budzior. “The carbon emitted while the asset is used tends to dwarf the emissions that come directly from delivering the project. It may be a factor of five or 10 bigger.

“So, as well as focusing on whether we should phase out diesel generators or put in electric tower cranes, we need to have a fundamentally different conversation, very early on in the project, about how we can reduce the carbon emissions once the asset is in use. That is actually way more important.”



Alexander Budzior

MAKING THE LEAP

For an insight into how decarbonisation projects can link across an entire city, look at Bristol City Leap, a joint venture project between the city council and Ameresco, a renewables company. The initiative tackles decarbonisation from a host of different angles, from retrofitting council buildings to designing new wind and solar farms. It's also expanding its innovative heat network, powered by low carbon energy sources, which currently heats around 2,000 disparate properties, including homes, businesses, health centres and schools.



James Sterling

The partnership has committed to at least £1bn worth of investment over its 20-year lifespan. Bristol City Leap co-founder James Sterling says it's now 80% of the way to the net-zero target by 2025 – and is busy “trying to tackle the hardest 20% as a priority”. Every individual project contributes to decarbonisation (as well as cutting costs for the council and its residents). But the real benefit comes in joining those projects together.

“If we're looking at connecting a building to the low-carbon heat network, we'll also ask what else we can do, such as improving the lighting and insulation,” says Sterling. “That's where the real beauty is. It's not a series of disparate technologies that we just drop in. It's that holistic package, which looks at decarbonisation, not just building by building, but on a city-wide scale. It's about that ripple effect.”

Post-delivery expectations

The Lower Thames Crossing team have done this thinking. They state that the project will be zero carbon in operations by 2030, and in maintenance by 2040, and point out that all UK roads are included in the UK's commitment to reach net-zero carbon by 2050.

Similar conversations are going on over at Jacobs, the technical professional services firm that won the Sustainability Award at the 2023 APM Project Management Awards.

“With our engineering, consulting and designing, we're trying to think long term and more holistically,” says Will Masters, Sales Lead for Sustainability at Jacobs. “The life cycle of an asset could be 30, 50 or 100 years. How much energy is it going to use during that lifetime? How many times will you need to rebuild or refurbish it?”

Masters says project managers have to embrace this new mindset – and the new technologies that enable it. He gives the example of smart energy systems in office buildings, which can be linked to Microsoft Teams. When somebody uses Teams to book a meeting room, the platform can tell the building's energy management system

to turn on the air conditioning or heating, half an hour before that room is going to be used. Once the meeting is done, it goes off again.

He adds that decarbonisation needn't mean burdening project managers with a whole slew of new tasks. It's about integrating this broader, longer-term thinking into every existing aspect of your project management.

“As a project manager, you fulfil a number of functions – from scheduling to cost and quality,” says Masters. “Each can be broken down into some form of sustainability. In quality, you could look at following the ISO 50001 or PAS 2080:2023 standards [which recognise energy and carbon management, respectively]. If you're talking cost, you could be thinking about whole-life value, not just capex.”

“The life cycle of an asset could be 30, 50 or 100 years. How much energy will it use during that lifetime?”



Finding the baseline data

But the need to change the prevailing mindset isn't the only challenge facing project professionals on the road to decarbonisation. There are plenty of others. For one thing, decarbonisation is incredibly complex. To be able to cut your carbon effectively, you first need to know how much you're producing. That can be easier said than done.

“The world doesn't have enough data on total carbon emissions,” says Budzier. “It's not that easy to come up with an absolutely firm number. Energy production is probably the most advanced area in terms of the amount of available data, but even there the error range can be huge.”

If you can get the data, you then need to know how to act on it, finding workable pathways for decarbonising all elements involved in the project. While that pathway may be well understood for electricity, using offshore wind or solar, for example, areas like cement and IT are trickier.



Will Masters



Decarbonisation is about integrating broader, longer-term thinking into every aspect of project management

Another potential hurdle is that decarbonisation is expensive. At least for now. It remains cheaper to run a diesel generator on a construction site than to invest in a first-generation innovation, such as purpose-built fuel cells or solar systems. “If you’re talking simply cost, it doesn’t make any sense at all to do that,” says Budzier. Yet, as the Lower Thames

Crossing team can attest, it can be done. Its proposal came in at 30% lower carbon emissions at the same price as more carbon-intensive traditional methods.

Finding a way to make it pay

Decarbonisation pays back in other ways, too. Talented people will find it more engaging and attractive to work on

projects where such clear purpose directly drives decisions. It’s similarly energising to be working with innovative technology, seeing damaging old practices replaced by nature-based solutions, like tree shade being used instead of air conditioning to cool buildings.

In 2022, National Highways designated the Lower Thames Crossing a pathfinder project, meaning part of its remit is to work with a broad range of partners – from major engineering companies to small businesses and universities – to develop innovative ways of building and maintaining low-carbon infrastructure. For Pidcock, this industry-wide knowledge sharing is key.

“It’s incumbent on projects like ours to help future projects with decarbonisation,” he says. “We’re trying to pump-prime the industry with regard to new technologies, because that will ultimately filter down to the house builders. We wouldn’t want to be tackling this alone. It wouldn’t be sustainable in the broadest sense that way. But the whole industry is getting behind decarbonisation and recognising the challenges we have to address.”

LOW-EMISSION THINKING

The drive to net zero doesn’t just need new technologies. It demands a whole new mindset from project professionals in how they approach their work. Here are three key changes:

- 1 Thinking from “right to left”. Consider what happens to the asset once the project is finished. How can the project contribute to decarbonising operations further down the line?**
- 2 Identifying the sources of carbon across the project, both where it’s embedded in whatever you build and where it’s created by how the project is run. And then trying to establish the best pathway to decarbonisation for each of those sources.**
- 3 Understanding the legacy you want the project to leave behind. The decarbonisation journey may not be cost-effective for the project itself. But any decarbonisation efforts may help pave the way for future projects to effect change – or, at the very least, influence the next project you work on.**



No walk in the park: The story behind 2023's Best Overall Project

THE NATIONAL TRUST AND NATIONAL LOTTERY HERITAGE FUND'S FUTURE PARKS ACCELERATOR TOOK THE TOP TROPHY AT THE APM AWARDS. ANDREW SAUNDERS FINDS OUT THE SECRETS TO ITS SUCCESS

There are an estimated 27,000 public parks in the UK. The largest, the aptly named Windsor Great Park, covers 28sq km and includes a 3km-long lake, while the smallest – Prince's Park in Burntwood, Staffordshire – is a mere 50sq m, barely enough space for its three trees and single bench.

But although parks are regularly used by around 57% of the population,

have well-documented positive effects on health and mental wellbeing, and are crucial for urban biodiversity, local authority budget cuts have resulted in spending on them being slashed by an estimated £690m since 2010, says the Association for Public Service Excellence.

“Declining park budgets were putting urban parks at risk, particularly in big cities,” says Victoria Bradford-Keegan,

Delivery Director of the Future Parks Accelerator (FPA), a joint venture between the National Trust and the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) that won two accolades at the APM Project Management Awards in 2023 – Overall Project of the Year and Social Project of the Year. “That in turn was putting at risk people’s access to green space, and all the benefits that brings.”



Far left (top to bottom): Parks are essential health assets; litter picking in Plymouth. Main: The FPA has worked to secure the future of urban green spaces. Above: A nature recovery project by The Parks Foundation.

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL; NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL; THE PARKS FOUNDATION; ©NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES/JAMES DOBSON//WWW.NATIONALTRUST.ORG.UK

Consequently, a nation that pioneered the concept of widespread public urban green spaces in the 19th century was in danger of losing many of them. The Communities and Local Government Select Committee described parks in England as being at a “tipping point of decline”. Enter the FPA, a programme that ran from 2019 to 2022, exploring new ways of funding, managing and thinking about the nation’s loved but often neglected public parks.

And while the National Trust may be better known for historic country estates and houses, the needs of the UK’s city dwellers have also long been part of its remit. Founder Octavia Hill bought parcels of urban land to turn into community gardens in the late 19th century and many are still going strong today.

“In some ways [the FPA] was the Trust going back to its roots,” says Bradford-Keegan. “But not in a



misty-eyed way. It’s also a recognition of the context in which the organisation is operating today.”

From cost centres to community assets

For its part, the NLHF, which has invested some £1bn in restoring historic parks since it was founded in 1994, was also looking for a more holistic way forward. “We already had a huge grant-funding programme, Parks for People, but we realised it wasn’t always solving the more fundamental problems,” says Eleanor Potter of the NLHF’s land and nature team, who was Senior Investment Manager for the FPA.

Rather than focusing on providing sticking plasters by fixing up decaying buildings and facilities, what was needed was a systemic shift in both funding and mindset around parks – from being a cost centre and a drain on scarce public resources to self-sustaining community assets with a vital role to play in creating

healthier, more liveable and more climate-resilient cities.

“We realised that if we were going to help local authorities find new sustainable sources of funding we were going to have to start thinking about whole systems and whole green spaces,” adds Potter. They needed to look at how to reverse the root causes of decline rather than only addressing the symptoms.

It quickly became clear that what was required was not just money, but also skills, tools and support. So, aided by investment of £14m (including



L–R: Victoria Bradford-Keegan and Eleanor Potter. Above left: Octavia Hill.

£1.2m from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government), the FPA adopted a “high support, high challenge” approach. It took inspiration from the start-up accelerator model that has catalysed so many innovations in the tech industry in recent years. “The accelerator model requires investors to be active participants,” says Potter. “It’s not just giving someone some money and letting them crack on. That was a departure for the Heritage Fund.”

Accelerator experimenters

A small cohort of ambitious and committed towns and cities were recruited to the programme, all of them with leadership and teams willing to take a chance on the accelerator ethos of test and learn, fast failure, risk taking and shared learning. The principle is that small is beautiful when it comes to innovation, and that the things that do work can be scaled up subsequently.

Out of 81 applications made to join the programme, eight were chosen – Bournemouth, Birmingham, Bristol, Camden and Islington, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Edinburgh, Nottingham, and Plymouth – and seven made it through to completion in 2023. Each had a dedicated account manager and a fully blended team.

The idea was for the Trust/NLHF to act as ‘critical friends’ and work alongside each local area to devise bespoke packages of support, including, where appropriate, external expert consultancy. But the atmosphere created turned out to be equally important.

“It took a while to bed down, but those relationships are amazing now. We created a psychologically safe space for people to work in, and that was what generated some of the real excitement and the feeling of being on a

“The accelerator model requires investors to be active participants. It’s not just giving someone some money and letting them crack on”

shared journey with shared challenges,” notes Potter.

It soon became evident that the contributions parks could make to many wider local authority goals – from health and wellbeing to biodiversity – were not well understood internally or externally. “Councils are quite siloed – parks and the green estate generally have this huge potential to deliver outcomes for a whole range of other council departments, but that wasn’t happening,” says Bradford-Keegan.

The silo effect also applied between councils as well as within them – councils did not talk very much to other councils, something that the FPA teams were able to address by spotting common issues across participating areas and bringing those people together to share their challenges.

A one-team culture

Helping the FPA teams to find their voices and really make the case for green infrastructure in a sea of often higher profile demands on resourcing was one of its emergent benefits, says Potter. “When we started we probably thought that [the FPA] would be quite asset focused. But the marketing and communications aspects – internal and external – turned out to be some of the most valuable. How do you advocate successfully to break down siloes? How do you get really senior people on board? And how do you go out and talk about things in a way that will really influence public opinion?”

Take Parks for Health, a joint initiative between Camden and Islington councils established under the aegis of the FPA.

“It was focused on how you reinvent parks as health assets – the funding to some extent, but also the staffing, and how to work with voluntary sector and health sector partners,” says Bradford-Keegan. The result is a brand-new strategy that is more sustainable as it incorporates parks into both councils’ overall strategic plan, rather than viewing them as nice-to-haves.

In return, the involvement of the Trust and NLHF provided reassurance to senior political leaders in the participating regions that this was a



Top: Birmingham Library rooftop garden. Above: Alfred Place Gardens, Camden. Main: Martin’s Pond nature reserve, Nottingham.

programme backed by professional structures and governance.

With multiple organisations required to work together, much effort was put into creating a ‘one team’ culture. Everyone, regardless of their employer, got an FPA email address, for example, and teams came together regularly to help build stronger relationships. “There was a lot of work required, especially at the outset, but it was worth it, because it was in pursuit of a truly shared endeavour,” says Potter.

Agile methodologies were adopted in recognition of the fact that the teams were, initially at least, not working towards a specific deliverable but rather figuring out what their options were and how they needed to change the ways they worked in order to access them. “The teams needed the investment in headspace and in wider wraparound support,” says Bradford-Keegan.

An eye on the bigger picture

Keeping an eye on the wider political, environmental and social context – the



APM's Future Lives and Landscapes: what the research shows

Among project professionals in the third sector who are currently working on a project intended to deliver a social benefit:

- Only 29% say they have sufficient funding to meet deadline and quality requirements
- 60% are confident there will be sufficient project skills to deliver more social value projects in this sector in the next five years
- 42% say insufficient funding is the biggest risk to projects of this type right now
- 42% say insufficient funding is the biggest risk to projects of this type in the next five years

Find out more



lens through which local politicians inevitably view their worlds – was another key plank of the FPA approach. To help embed this, PESTLE analysis was built into the process and resulted in a number of changes including significant expansions of scope in response to the declaration of climate emergencies by some participating councils.

In terms of its original key goal of surfacing alternative finance models, the FPA has helped its participants access an additional £65m of funding. Notably this includes setting up the UK's first urban habitat bank in Plymouth, which could secure between £25m and £30m of investment in the city's green spaces over the next 30 years.

Habitat banks involve using funding from the private sector to boost biodiversity (and help mitigate climate change impacts such as flooding) through the proliferation of 'wild' urban green spaces. It's a concept that is set to hit the mainstream in 2024, as new legislation will require property

developers to demonstrate that all new developments will be accompanied by a boost, rather than reduction, in biodiversity.

This so-called biodiversity net gain will be achieved through habitat banks, species-rich areas of land whose creation and upkeep will be financed by property companies. Thanks to the FPA there is now a model that local authorities can use to access this lucrative new revenue stream.

Green spaces as valuable infrastructure

The programme has also resulted in more joined-up thinking around parks. In Nottingham, for example, volunteering in green spaces is moving from a piecemeal, site-by-site approach to an integrated one. And thanks to Birmingham's Our Future City plan, senior council leaders are now championing the role of green infrastructure in delivering social, environmental and health benefits for all.

Some 400 new green spaces are set to be created in the city over the next 25 years.

The fact that so many tangible results have been produced by a programme that first had to go looking for its own outcomes before it could think about delivering them is a remarkable achievement. "We've got an array of blueprints for doing things differently that other local authorities can now pick up and implement themselves," says Bradford-Keegan.

But there is another less tangible but equally important outcome, as Potter explains. "The relationships that have been established and that will continue into the future are a really strong legacy – the people who will now pick up the phone and talk to each other when they have a knotty problem to solve."

So while the mission to save our green spaces is still no walk in the park, thanks to the work of the FPA the way ahead looks considerably less bumpy and uncertain than it did only a few short years ago.

FAILURE AS A CHOICE

WHY HAS SUCH A LACK OF SUCCESS BECOME TOLERATED ON OUR PROJECTS? AND WHAT DOES THAT SAY ABOUT OUR ATTITUDE TO FAILURE?

It's a provocative question, but why is failure tolerated – even expected – on projects? Damning statistics that show that the majority of projects fail to meet their budgets, timeframes or expectations are shocking to those outside the profession, but resignedly accepted by those working on projects. What's gone wrong? What will it take to provoke us out of this way of thinking?

There are sharp minds with practical solutions who can help shake the profession out of its low expectations – yes, success should be expected and is possible, time after time. But is this idea just too difficult to contemplate? And just how should we think about failure? Should we ever view it as a positive thing? *Project* asked some of those at the top of the project profession to give their take.

Resigned apathy

Mark Wild OBE, MD of SGN, and ex-CEO of Crossrail



The topic of major programme underperformance is back in the headlines. Of course, this latest cycle of a perennially recurring theme has been prompted by the decision to curtail HS2, but the general weariness is also related to a series of high-profile project issues. This general sense of resigned apathy is very unhelpful to the project community, of course. We face extraordinary challenges in the future, whether it be the path to net zero or the future of mobility. A serious big build is coming our way and we need the confidence of the public and the politicians they elect.

I was privileged to have led Crossrail to completion and the opening of the Elizabeth Line. It's interesting that despite the very up-and-down history of the programme it is seen as a great success now people have been able to use it. My personal learning in the delivery of Crossrail was the benefit of radical transparency in the delivery, explaining in simple terms what's going on and why it is hard.

So, explaining the delivery and celebrating the outcomes that we have achieved are important. These huge programmes are incredible acts of will – extraordinary breakthroughs in technology and scale, changing lives for the better. They need to be celebrated. I was impressed to read about the completion of the new electricity interconnector from Denmark to the UK, the longest in the world. We look forward soon to the completion of



the huge Thames Tideway super sewer. These achievements and many more are real and tangible. We can do it, and this needs to be communicated.

Of course, the project profession does need to look in the mirror as well. Major programmes that are on time and on budget are rare indeed. This is a trend that without correction is unlikely to improve. The ever-increasing scale and complexity of these endeavours requires a new response.

The solution to this challenge lies in leadership that moves beyond standard collaboration and into a more elevated and purposeful 'owning the whole'. This means much more transparent collective work, always with the end outcome in mind. In future, successful major programmes will be expert at ensuring the voice of the eventual operator is influential at the start. These successful programmes will also use modular solutions extensively. Finally, and most importantly, they will embrace diversity, have a culture of curiosity and an environment where everyone can speak truth to power.

"A serious big build is coming our way and we need the confidence of the public and the politicians they elect"

Success doesn't sell but failure does

Adrian Dooley, creator of the Praxis Framework



We seem to be obsessed with project failure. I regularly see newspaper articles about

failed projects with estimates of general failure rates quoted as anything from 30% to 95% – yes, 95%! It makes you wonder how anything ever gets built or developed.

It's not unreasonable that we are obsessed with project failure, although I would prefer to look at it as being obsessed with project success. In our daily lives as professionals we constantly focus on success – that's our professional responsibility. The question is: why do we outwardly appear to be obsessed with failure rather than success?

I've been involved in project delivery for a long time in many different roles. One conclusion I have come to is that success doesn't sell, but failure does. There is no doubt that many

high-profile projects fail in some form or another, but when perceptions of failure vary so widely, there will always be someone who thinks a project was a failure. Newspapers won't go looking for people who think it was a success – especially if it's a public sector project.

As for surveys of failure rates, these are rarely worth the paper they are printed on. They have poor research methodologies and are often conducted as a precursor for a sale. Obviously, if you are selling a solution, you need a problem to solve. The more serious the problem, the better the solution looks.

My great friend and colleague Geoff Reiss once submitted a manuscript for a book entitled 'The Invisible Project Manager', on the basis that successful project managers are invisible. The publisher accepted the book but not the title, saying: "It just won't sell."

A positive bias towards failure

Darren Dalcher, Professor in Strategic Project Management at Lancaster University Management School



I should probably begin by declaring a positive bias towards failure. I have spent decades revelling in the diversity, richness and dogged persistence of different forms of failure. As a failure connoisseur, I have collected samples of distinctive species from across the globe, comparing and contrasting their characteristics, thereby fostering a healthy respect for failure and its potential.

So, what have I observed? First, there is a need for experimentation. Many organisations struggle with innovation, not least because so much is unknown in relatively unexplored contexts, domains and situations. Our ability to innovate in new spaces often depends on a process of experimentation where new ideas, concepts and products are created and their feasibility, impacts and outcomes are evaluated. This enables us to buy information about the context and potential approaches for dealing with it. Without such information, there is a risk of our best guesses being elevated to a

This all sounds a bit cynical – but if I'm being cynical about failure, it means I'm being optimistic about success. I believe a lot more projects succeed than the media reports. Whatever the failure rate really is, we want it to be lower, but we won't learn to be more successful by obsessing over dubious statistics about failure.

Let's learn from failure but celebrate success. Only then will we get out of the attitude of, 'Oh, another failed project. Nothing new here.'

promissory level, instead of remaining as working hypotheses.

Second, we are struggling with the notion of protection. Social scientists recognised decades ago that risk had become a dominant feature of society, replacing wealth production as a means of measuring progress. Shielding ourselves from the risk of the unknown through layers of management, governance, audits and assurance may dampen our appetite for risk, change, innovation and adventure. As the change efforts of society are increasingly characterised by greater ambition, scope and scale, we find ourselves dealing with uncertainty, ambiguity and turbulence that defy our overprotective instincts.

Third, learning and improvement form an important part of operating in a dynamic setting. Given that not all projects are the same and there are no one-size-fits-all solutions, our approaches should reflect a diversity of means, assumptions and expectations. Dynamic conditions call for continuous sensing, learning and adapting. Making mistakes is acceptable, especially when we do not know enough up front and must show a willingness to learn.

The final point talks to appetite and strategy. Projects are arenas for renewal and innovation, reflecting the ambitions and wishes of society. There is likely to be a constant pool of ideas, suggestions and potential experiments in progress. Over time, some ideas will prove more promising than others as new insights emerge. Having a constant reservoir of ideas is an indication of the health of innovation and the residual ambition levels that drive it. Deciding how to balance initiatives, appetites and emerging achievements in a forever-changing, messy world will allow us to continue to benefit and prosper from the essential learning while cherishing the precious gift of failure.

“Our ability to innovate in new spaces often depends on a process of experimentation”



Five reasons we tolerate project failure

Eddie Obeng, educator, TED speaker and author



It has never crossed my paradigm-bounded mind that all projects could be perfect with zero defects. I've found five key reasons why we tolerate the failure of projects and, worse, why we sabotage them ourselves.

First, like Tinker Bell, perfect projects die because we don't believe they can exist. We don't even try. Do it and tell everyone it's possible.

Second, project people are optimists and prefer the bustle of activity to the calm of pre-elimination. We eagerly look forward to challenges and surprises. Make the challenge to spot issues and resolve them in advance.

Third, organisations reward bad behaviour. Who do you remember and promote? The project lead who battles risks, presents issues to the board and then puts out fires? Or the project lead who delivers trouble free? We give no incentive to fix issues before they arise. Reward the quietly competent.

Fourth, organisations deceive themselves on the ease of project delivery. Which gets the green light to proceed? The project that looks clearly specified and has a long, well-presented business case? Or the project that acknowledges that the business case is an estimate, that there will be learning during execution, that organisational politics will undermine progress and that metrics are meaningless? We pretend that foggy or complex projects are painting-by-numbers. Encourage honesty instead.

Finally, organisations use old-world methods of project-control-by-review (guiding the future by looking through the rearview mirror). So, which one are senior executives keener to have? A review meeting on progress to date that holds the project lead's feet to the fire? Or a workshop with a focus on upcoming challenges and how they will be overcome in advance?

We look to the past to guide us, but instead adopt a zero-defect methodology.

PEER TO PEER

If you're experiencing Malcolm Tucker levels of profanity and chaos, that's a sure sign of office politics

HOW TO MANAGE PROJECT POLITICS

IT CAN BE THE TRICKIEST ASPECT OF ANY PROJECT TO NAVIGATE, BUT NEVER FEAR, WRITES NUKEY PROCTOR

'Politics' is not a dirty word, but it does carry a lot of weight. It can have many meanings, from the art of government to dishonest practices. On an emotional level, it can carry a negative connotation, associated with playing games, being duplicitous or trying to manipulate situations for our own benefit. Politics is also, however, inevitable. In our personal and professional environments, the word captures the existence of groups and individuals with their own sets of interests. In a work context, this is simply the reality of what happens when you bring different teams together.

Understanding, recognising and responding to the politics that exist in our places of work can provide us with extra tools to navigate the complexity of our environments. The most effective and skilled colleagues I've ever worked with understood this and rose above politics to deliver their projects successfully.

BBC PHOTO SALES

They used techniques that skillfully map out the networks of people, teams and relationships that influence change, while displaying the communication, stakeholder management and relationship building that made you want to work with them.

There is a genuine power in understanding the politics happening around us, without letting it distract and eat up our time. Thinking back over my 20 years' experience working in the technology sector, here are five tips on how to navigate politics.

1 Use the power of insight

In an era of data-driven decision-making, too often when determining our next course of action, we overlook taking time to gather the information that can help us make the best choices. This is critical when navigating politics within our project delivery or roles, as the insight of relationships, stakeholders and past experiences can be pivotal in guiding the next best move.

Most of us wouldn't buy a car or a house without doing research beforehand, and it's important to apply that logic to stakeholder engagement. This translates into performing our due diligence on key players, their interests and effective ways to communicate with them. Doing so can elicit priceless intelligence on what works and what doesn't in terms of influencing them and using that to help you identify traps to avoid and templates for success.

Taking the time to have conversations, seek advice and gain input from those around us can shape our approaches

By focusing on the outcomes, you can help your organisation elevate above personal dynamics and maintain focus



Blame apportion is the opposite of healthy conflict

to problem resolution. The most effective colleagues I work with gain that data and use it to their advantage.

2 Evaluate emotions

There is a school of thought that suggests that operating successfully in business requires taking emotions out of the equation, effectively ensuring we have the capacity to operate with objectivity and impartiality. This is true; however, this does not equate to ignoring the importance that emotions can have over our own behaviour and the behaviour of those around us. At the heart of politics are people and at the heart of people are emotions.

Learning to recognise the outward indicators of stress, discomfort or disinterest can influence interactions inside and outside our teams to the benefit of our goals. Likewise, self-analysis during periods of pressure can

help us to develop the skills to evaluate our emotional state, understand how it impacts us and the techniques to regulate it. Understanding this and building our emotional intelligence can pay dividends when navigating the complex environments of projects.

3 Focus on the outcome

The above should give us context – an understanding of the layered dynamics that feed into the reactions happening around us when trying to deliver our work. Once that context is clear, I recommend trying to step away from people and instead home in on the desired outcomes. By focusing on the outcomes, you can help your organisation elevate above personal dynamics and maintain focus on what the collective group is trying to achieve. Key questions to ask could include:

- What are we trying to fix?
- Who are we trying to help?

FIVE TOP TIPS ON BECOMING A POLITICAL MASTERMIND

- 1 **Get as much data and information as possible to make informed decisions.**
- 2 **Evaluate emotions so you can try not to be beholden to them.**
- 3 **Identify and focus on the outcome you're trying to reach.**
- 4 **Establish environments where conflict can be resolved in healthy channels.**
- 5 **Pick the best-placed team or person to take the right course of action.**

If you can do the above, the next time the topic of politics comes up in your place of work, for you it will be a word you can associate with power, progress and success.

- **How might what we do impact people?**
- **Why are we making these changes?**

Maintaining focus on what you are trying to accomplish, and to whose benefit, can act as a lodestar and move the path away from distractions that compromise progress. Clarity of focus can also feed into the preparation, communication and rationale that bolster our stakeholder engagement strategies. Navigating politics in our projects is a key component of stakeholder management. It is not the only element of it; however, when we disregard how politics may influence our projects, it can very easily spiral to consume a disproportionate amount of effort.

Being aware of this, and tackling it with the rigour with which you would manage financials, resources or communications, mitigates that risk.

4 Manage conflict healthily Politics reflect the reality that different groups may have different interests, which may complement and/or compete with each other, but what is unavoidable is that conflict can occur.

In August 2022, the Myers-Briggs Company conducted a survey on conflict at work, which found:

- **On average, respondents spent 4.34 hours per week dealing with conflict at work, a more than 50% increase since their 2008 survey, where the average was 2.1 hours.**
- **The most common cause of conflict in the workplace was poor communication, which appeared in the top three causes for 47% of respondents.**
- **When asked, "How important is conflict handling as a leadership skill or management skill?", 98% of respondents said it was either extremely or very important.**

When we consider these results, enabling conflict to be managed in a healthy way provides tangible business benefits. This is easier said than done. However, on a practical level, a good place to start is by drawing upon the strong body of evidence that exists on how to recognise, strategise and respond to conflict.

A great resource is the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI). The TKI is a highly regarded framework for conflict management and can help in multiple ways. It can help to highlight when 'assertive' or 'cooperative' approaches could be adopted when dealing with the situation of conflict. There isn't a right or wrong, simply what is effective based on the situation.

Having done this, it sets out five broad modes for conflict management: competing, avoiding, accommodating, collaborating and compromising. Alongside frameworks such as this, I would encourage assessing the culture of your work environment and how you can help to embed healthy ways of addressing conflict. Environments

that are most likely to undertake healthy conflict are those that discourage blame apportion, provide forums to air differences in opinion and celebrate people who collaborate well.

Individually, we also need to be accountable, to reflect good conduct in our interactions, to actively listen, to be considered in our communication and to be transparent. All of the above can contribute to navigating politics in the workplace by reducing the likelihood of conflict and exercising the right behaviours when conflict inevitably arises.

Environments that are most likely to undertake healthy conflict are those that discourage blame apportion

5 Right person at the right level

My final tip is a simple one: when navigating politics, there are times when the 'who' does matter. As is universally recognised in stakeholder management, relationships matter. As is recognised in projects, roles and responsibilities matter. Finally, as is recognised in business, accountability matters. If you find yourself trying to traverse a politically sensitive situation, take a step back and analyse the parties involved. Challenge your team and organisation. Who is the best-placed person to take whatever action is required to resolve the impasse? In my experience, pragmatic analysis like this can reduce effort and more swiftly steer you to the best outcome.

Nukey Proctor is Head of Service Delivery at transformation consultancy Methods

PUTTING INNOVATION INTO PRACTICE

NEIL JOHNSON, A PROJECT DIRECTOR AT AECOM, WORKED ON THE LOW CROSBY FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT SCHEME, WHICH WON APM'S INNOVATION IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT AWARD 2023. HERE'S HOW THEY DID IT...



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An entirely nature-based solution was devised to tackle Low Crosby's history of flooding – no steel or concrete was used



Innovation is a fundamental principle that drives improvement in the field of project management. Without innovation we do things the same way, whether good or bad. Innovation should always be a key consideration at all stages of the project life cycle but particularly in the early stages, when decisions that are made can have a big effect on the overall direction of the project.

The Low Crosby Flood Risk Management Scheme (FRMS) was a project that required 'out of the box' thinking to ensure that an effective solution could be found to a complex problem. Innovation was at the core of the project, resulting in the Environment Agency's (EA's) first-ever carbon sequestration FRMS, which has set the standard for future schemes and contributes to the EA's goal to reach net zero by 2045–2050.

Project background

Low Crosby, near Carlisle in Cumbria, has suffered from repeated flooding over many years due to its location on the River Eden's right bank. Recent floods have included Storm Desmond in December 2015, which saw 60 homes flooded. It was this incident that spurred the investment from government to improve the flood defences.

The remit for the EA was to better protect Low Crosby's homes, businesses and communities. The objectives, aligned with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, were to deliver key flood risk management outcomes, protect and enhance the environment, promote health and wellbeing and implement a sustainable, low-carbon solution.

There were many stakeholders involved in developing the solution, including residents and private landowners, local businesses and Natural England.

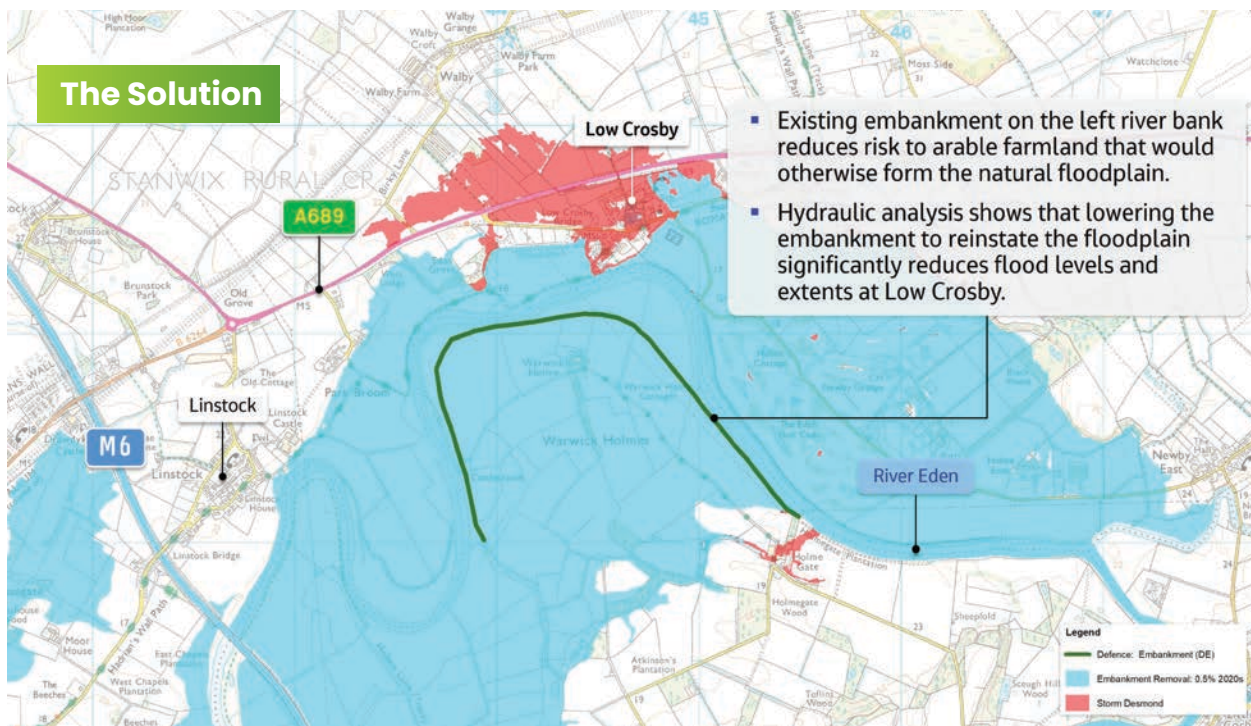
Stakeholders worked together, through focused engagement, to build up a cohesive view of what a sustainable solution would be for the community. The developed solution was to reprofile a 3km stretch of private embankment on the left bank of the river. By lowering the embankment, the capacity of the floodplain was increased. This had the outcome of significantly reducing the risk and severity of flooding.

What was done differently?

The EA's project team, working with framework partners Jacobs, identified an initial leading solution through an optioneering process. Initially, a long list of options were identified and reviewed, before being reduced to a short list following the removal of unviable options – including those that were technically difficult or unaffordable – which then identified the leading option.

At this point in the project, it was very much a conventional approach focusing on new flood walls and embankments. This was in large part due to the significant community- and time-related pressures that the team were subject to, and, while a scheme based on this approach could have worked in the short term, the risk of future overtopping of the defences remained. The project team had always been conscious that an alternative, entirely nature-based approach, involving the removal of an extensive agricultural, privately owned

While a conventional approach could have worked in the short term, the risk of overtopping of the defences remained



embankment on the opposite side of the river, could be a viable flood risk management option.

The building blocks of this innovative approach started to be put in place in conversations between the EA, Natural England and the landowner. This solution complemented the landowner developing a new Countryside Stewardship agreement that opened up an economically viable alternative approach to managing the land, moving from arable farmland to permanent pasture.

This was something that floodplain reconnection via the reprofiling of the existing flood embankment could enhance while still delivering the significant flood risk improvements the project team sought. Post-scheme, the village would move from 1.3% annual exceedance probability

The topography was used to form a natural drainage mechanism, reducing the need for a hard engineering approach

(AEP) to 0.5% AEP, demonstrating a significant increase in the standard of flood defence protection. Drainage was also a key consideration for the scheme. A solution was derived to connect the floodwater back to the river after a flood event by utilising the existing topography of the land to form a natural drainage mechanism, further reducing the need for a hard engineering approach.

Innovation and future uses

Digital innovation was at the forefront of the design stage. The design model was fully digital, including piloting the EA's library of smart, parametric 3D model components, use of design model data to control the earth-moving plant, and development of an automation tool to extract digital asset data quickly from the federated graphical model. The hydraulic analysis also benefited from Jacobs' latest developments in its Flood Modeller software, including using the Flood Cloud to reduce overall computing time.

Implementing an entirely nature-based solution is a highly

Low Crosby has a long history of flooding, but its existing defences weren't up to the task, with severe flooding affecting the area in 2015

innovative approach to reducing flooding. This is especially true given the scheme is situated in the lower course of a large river, where traditional, heavily engineered approaches are often the only viable option. The project team drew on their collective knowledge and innovative principles to maximise this delivery opportunity.

It was evident that a significant efficiency could be achieved by reprofiling the existing bund as opposed to removing it and disposing off-site. Proceeding with the design on that basis allowed the project team to realise efficiencies and estimated carbon savings of 292 tCO₂e.

The economic data of this project contributed to research into 'carbonomics' and is now being actively used across the EA's Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) capital investment programme. The scheme contributed data for education, research and development studies. Outputs



Key outcomes



Flood risk reduced to 95 homes



£15.5m of economic benefit*



185ha of floodplain reconnected



Over 3km of river habitat restored



Up to 30,000 tonnes of CO2 sequestered*



0 tonnes of concrete and steel used

*Over a 100-year assessment period

from the economic model were used to inform the EA’s new carbon impacts tool – a method for assessing carbon emissions caused by flooding. This tool was then used for the whole-life carbon assessment, which also used analysis methods developed by Jacobs on other infrastructure projects to estimate the impact of land use change on carbon emissions/sequestration.

Valuable lessons for projects elsewhere

This project is also an example of how a scheme can benefit from research and investment elsewhere. Research undertaken by the design team to develop a method for quantifying the impact of land use change on carbon emissions, to support the development of highways schemes, was used in this project. This is an example of a methodology that could be very easily deployed on many other types of projects.

Furthermore, with the need to demonstrate biodiversity net gain set to soon become a statutory planning requirement, this project was an early adopter of the

This is what can be achieved when organisations, stakeholders and the community work together

Defra methodology for assessing and quantifying habitat value. The outputs of this assessment were utilised to demonstrate benefits from ecosystems services and to leverage additional Flood Defence Grant-in-Aid funding. The process of doing this is now embedded and being actively used on other projects within the EA’s FCERM project delivery portfolio.

Stakeholders and local community come top

Utilising and contributing to technical developments such as these is important but one of the most important elements of the delivery approach on this project relates to the stakeholder and community engagement. From the pivotal engagement between the EA, Natural England and the

landowner, to the communication with the community Flood Action Group, the engagement approaches should be celebrated and shared with the wider industry as a shining example of what can be achieved when organisations, stakeholders and the community work together for the greater good.

The sheer number of organisations and people involved in the scheme demonstrates the collaborative nature of project management and how important each and every person is to the success of the project. This project is an excellent example of how collaboration between organisations can lead to project success. Through the EA’s frameworks, the project was delivered in partnership with Jacobs and VolkerStevin, which provided design and construction services respectively; Mott MacDonald, Binnies and AECOM, which provided professional services; and multiple personnel from various EA teams. The project team also collaborated with Natural England, the local planning authority, the town council, the private landowner and, most importantly, the local community.

NAVIGATING PROJECT NEGOTIATIONS

NAVIGATING PROJECT NEGOTIATIONS: A FIVE-STEP APPROACH IS A NEW MUST-READ BOOK FROM APM BY PROJECT EXPERT SHARON NOLAN. BELOW IS AN EXCLUSIVE EXTRACT

Negotiation happens when two or more people need to resolve a conflict peacefully, or to secure early engagement of the stakeholders to avoid conflict later in a project. Exploring all options can provide the basis of the working relationship and identify where conflict might arise.

There are five steps to negotiating successfully:

- 1 Preparation and planning**
- 2 Definition of ground rules**
- 3 Clarification and justification**
- 4 Bargaining and problem solving**
- 5 Closure**

It is important to be aware that negotiation happens all the time in the workplace and during the implementation of successful projects. These steps are not to be confused with the stages of a project but are independently applied within each stage of the project.

Negotiation happens all the time in the workplace and during the implementation of successful projects

Project negotiations: what's your style?

Project negotiation starts from the beginning of a project during the business case and continues through to the closure and handover. However, it should be recognised that negotiation can take place either formally or informally throughout a project. The Thomas–Kilmann model, devised by Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann, identifies five styles of negotiation that are used to handle conflict:

- 1 Competition (win/lose).** This style is based on winning at all costs with very little regard for the working relationship.
- 2 Collaboration (win/win).** This style is about working together. There is a need to maintain and grow the relationship, and this style is usually considered when the relationship is expected to be needed outside of just one project.

3 Compromise (split the difference). This style can sometimes be considered a lazy way to negotiate. It is possible that



one or both parties can come out of the negotiation feeling disappointed. This style is also known as 'I win/lose some, you lose/win some', which is really a form of bargaining.

4 Accommodation (I lose/you win). This style can be a powerful way of negotiating if it is



Each party will need to have an outcome in mind and will be led by the relationship it has with all other parties

To succeed in all these styles of negotiation, you need to consider your options and be aware of the tactic you wish to use. There are various circumstances where negotiation is useful. For example, the expectations of a project. What can be achieved in what time frame is usually an area of conflict. There's also the question of how much a project is likely to cost. All of these things create a need to discuss and agree an acceptable outcome, and this is likely to come at the price of quality. Stakeholders tend to start wanting the best quality, in the quickest time and at the cheapest price. Something inevitably needs to give, but at what cost? Each party involved in the negotiating discussions will need to have an outcome in mind and will be led by the relationship it has with all other parties. Each competes with each other.

Whichever approach you decide on, it is necessary to apply the principles of negotiation. From the start of a project and during the first meeting of key stakeholders, each party should define its objectives and criteria, establishing what it wants to achieve and how best to accomplish that. Each party should

done deliberately. If you know you will need to negotiate something more important to you further in the relationship, then by allowing the other party to win the negotiation, you are opening up a degree of trust and allowing the relationship to develop. If this style is achieved by accident, you, I'm afraid, might be seen as the loser.

SHUTTERSTOCK

5 Avoidance (lose/lose).

This style is used when neither the relationship nor the outcome of the negotiation is important. There are times when the cost of the negotiation outweighs the benefits of any possible outcome. Sometimes it is wisest to withdraw from negotiations or avoid them entirely.

Successful negotiation allows goodwill to develop despite differences in interests and viewpoints

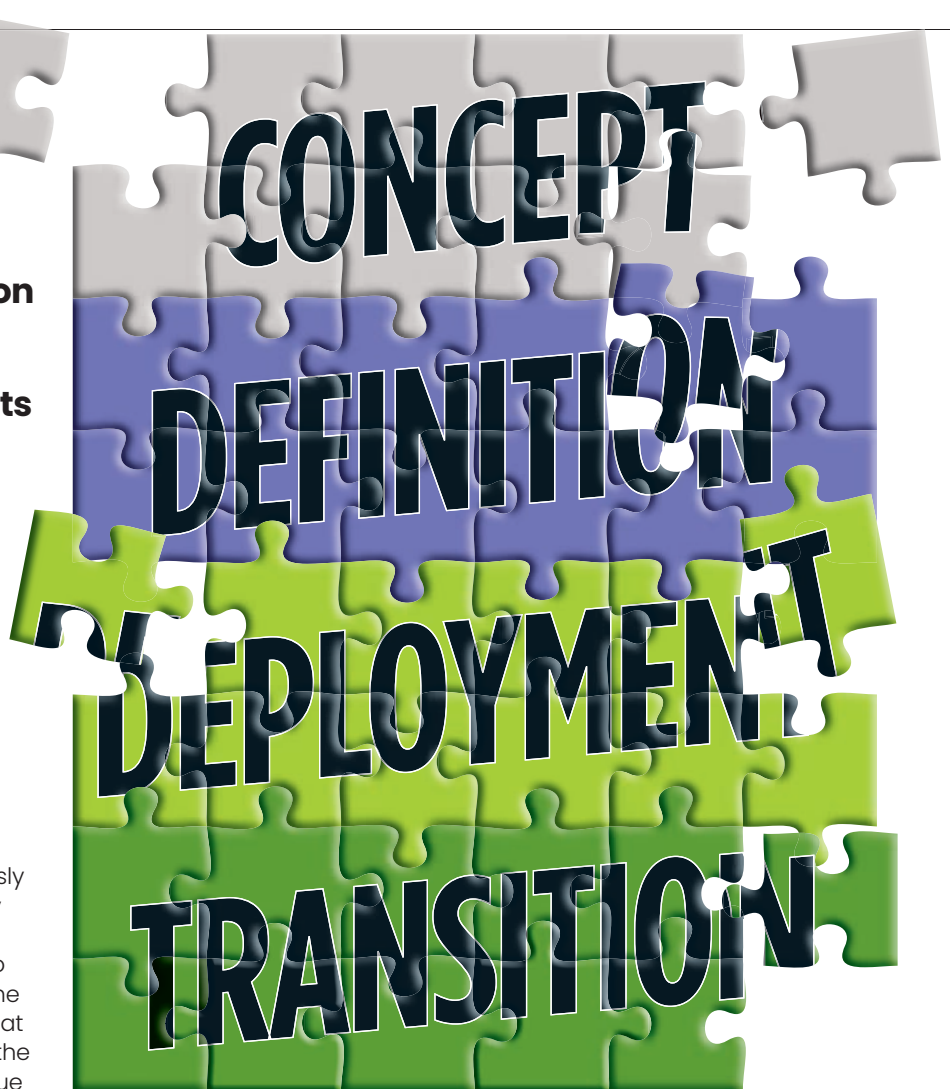
consider its best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA). In other words, review all options and decide what would be acceptable and what wouldn't, under any circumstances.

Negotiation – throughout a project

One should not negotiate over value-based positions – for example, what was paid previously or historically. Instead, view every negotiation on its merits now. Things change, prices respond to the markets and budgets become tighter; therefore, the value of what is required should be judged on the present situation. What is the value now? What is a reasonable rate to pay for this service or product? This requires research by all parties so they know the value of what is being agreed.

It is important for both parties to recognise the most favourable position from which each starts its negotiation. This is the point that would make one party feel that it has succeeded, possibly even got one over its associates. The trick is finding what each party's BATNA is and where both parties can reach an agreement somewhere between the two – that is, anywhere in the zone of possible agreement (ZOPA).

If done well, successful negotiation helps build strong, respectful relationships with others. It allows goodwill to develop despite differences in interests, opinions and viewpoints, and provides the opportunity for colleagues and associates to



Although negotiation happens in our everyday working life, it is very rarely taught

respect the concerns of all sides in a negotiation. This then helps to avoid future conflicts, as both parties are equally satisfied, and by merely having the conversation in a calm and reasonable manner, barriers against having further communication are removed. This situation would be considered a win/win – successful from both viewpoints.

Although negotiation happens in our everyday working life, it is very rarely taught at school, or taught at all. How much better at this task

we would all be if we knew how to negotiate and had adequate experience in applying it.

Negotiation throughout a project's different stages

There are four stages of project management: Concept, Definition, Deployment and Transition. The five phases of negotiation can sit independently within each of the stages of project management, as follows:

1 Concept stage: While considering the feasibility of a project, many points of the business case will require negotiation. Factors such as what needs to be included in the project, what success looks like and the expected outcome. Each of the areas requiring negotiation



will need to be planned for, the definition of the ground rules will need to be considered, especially if different people, teams or departments are responsible for the topic being negotiated. There will need to be clarification of what is being negotiated – is everyone on the same page? Then the bargaining should be addressed, remembering that each contributor will have an agenda. Ideally, all involved in the negotiation will put their cards on the table, where possible. Finally, the negotiation should be closed. Do not carry the negotiation for one topic over to another topic unless that has been agreed previously in the clarification phase.

2 Definition stage: During this stage of a project, the project manager will produce a project plan and will be having initial conversations with key service and resource providers, gaining estimates and costs. Alternative project methodologies will be considered, possibly even debated if it's not clear how the project will proceed. Does the project lend itself to a linear, iterative or hybrid methodology? There would be a need to discuss which of these three methodologies was important to the parties. Although project managers like to run their projects by the triangle rule – time, cost and quality in equal measure – realistically, one of these has to give. Very rarely is cost allowed to go out of control,

You should be flexible and think creatively. You should consider lots of different routes with acceptable outcomes

Always bear in mind an ultimate goal but consider a few minimum acceptable outcomes

even for companies or individuals who have access to money. The risk of quality being allowed to be affected is also unrealistic. The risk could be the company's reputation or the item or service moving away from what was originally offered. Which leaves time. Even though time is the one area that can be negotiated, most protagonists still need the work to be done in the quickest time, or to be allowed to deliver in the longest time. Time still needs strict controls. Once again, each negotiation topic needs to be considered independently and the phases of negotiation applied.

3 Deployment phase: The key components will be constructed and brought together for the final product. The project manager will have to address time delays, personnel absences, expectation and change management, and negotiation will play a large part in this activity, using the negotiation phases.

4 Transition: The need to negotiate timelines and acceptance criteria. There is a need to agree that the project has ended and the product has returned to business as usual (BAU). Is there an argument to be negotiated about whether the project should be extended or are both parties accepting the completion of the project? Each of these phases requires planning, so that you can determine what you want and be aware of the best possible outcome for any situation. You will

need to have a clear idea of what your least acceptable offer is and what will happen if an agreement isn't reached. To avoid any final disagreements, these topics should be negotiated at the beginning of the project and included in the agreed terms of reference (ToR). And again, you need to apply the phases independently of each negotiation.

Approach negotiations with flexibility and creativity

To paraphrase Michael Wheeler in his book *The Art of Negotiation: How to Improve Agreement in a Chaotic World*, a negotiation is something fluid and unpredictable. You should be flexible and think creatively. When entering a negotiation, you can't prepare for what the other parties' agendas might be, but you can prepare for how you will address the negotiations. Wheeler's analogy is to develop a map because, during negotiations, you should consider lots of different routes with acceptable outcomes. You should always bear in mind an ultimate goal but consider a few minimum acceptable outcomes (your baseline), and these should be pinpointed on your map. As well as comparing a negotiation strategy to a map, Wheeler also uses the analogy of a recipe, saying that you wouldn't make a recipe without preparing the ingredients – so you shouldn't enter a negotiation without preparation. He also recommends that you have a Plan B, although this may need to be prepared during the negotiation. That way, if something comes up that you didn't expect, you can be ready and willing to take an option you hadn't considered before.

Navigating Project Negotiations: A Five-Step Approach can be bought at apm.org.uk/book-shop



HOW TO BUILD A CAREER THAT MAKES INNOVATION HAPPEN

**(AND HELPS YOU ENJOY A BETTER
TRAIN JOURNEY TOO)**

**FOR HER OUTSTANDING WORK, SOPHIE DAVIES
WAS RECOGNISED AS A FINALIST FOR APM'S YOUNG
PROJECT PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR AWARD.
CHARLES ORTON-JONES MEETS THE HIGH-FLYING
PROJECT MANAGER AT NETWORK RAIL**

Here's a fantasy. The next time you travel on the rail network and find something to moan about – an out-of-order lift, a glitch in the booking app, wonky Wi-Fi, confusing signposts – imagine possessing the ability to fix those infuriating errors. Even better, you could dream up creative ways to make rail travel more delightful.

This is the world of Sophie Davies. As members of the R&D team at Network Rail, she and her colleagues invent ways to enhance rail travel across the UK. Got an idea to make the commute more palatable? She's the one who can make it happen.

Taking advantage of cutting-edge tech

"We are the R&D team in what's called the Technical Authority," says Davies. "Our job is to identify

technologies and solutions that can help the railways improve." This encompasses everything from passenger experience and customer service to back-end tech and engineering.

"We are currently looking at ways to make lifts and escalators more accessible," reveals Davies. "People need to know whether a lift or escalator is installed or functioning. For some people, the station is inaccessible without

"I looked at project management and saw what was involved. I later applied for the Network Rail graduate scheme"

them. But not all stations have lifts and escalators, and others may be out of order. So we've created a live status report, viewable in the accessibility map – Google it and it'll come up," she says.

It's more than just a notification system. "We've installed sensors in the equipment so the information is accurate in real time," says Davies. "It's more than just whether the lift or escalator is working. It can tell us if a component fails. We are combining it with a software project to create a strategic platform for Network Rail. Our maintainers can log in and get a status report, including the age of assets and which are the worst performing, and see trends in things like failure patterns in different types of lift. It's a great way to improve performance and reliability."

It's not just passengers and in-house developers who benefit. "We are taking it a step further," she says. "We are making the data open, so it's available to external developers. This means Citymapper or Trainline or any other application maker can use the data however they want."

Another of Davies' projects is to change infrastructure inspections: "We are automating tunnel examinations," she says. "Currently our tunnels are checked once a year. People need to physically go into the tunnel and examine it. They'll do a thing called tap testing, listening to the sound a brick is making to identify defects. It's old school. Our new method uses LIDAR [light based radar] and photogrammetry. We send cameras down the tunnel on a train or trolley. The process creates a detailed map of the tunnel, including any cracks. It's faster, detects problems more accurately and avoids sending people into dangerous locations."

A labyrinth of stakeholders

As Project Manager, Davies helps take ideas from inception to production. It's no easy task. Working for Network Rail means handling an astonishingly varied



“It’s important to know where the role of project manager stops. You’ve got to prioritise the important things”

and work together.” Then there is the Department for Transport and regulator the Office of Rail and Road. The freight operating companies too. “There are a lot of people and parties with different interests,” she says.

Aged just 25, Davies is remarkably at home in this labyrinth. It’s clear she’s a natural project manager. She trained as a lawyer, gaining a first-class degree at the University of Birmingham. The siren call of project management lured her in. “My heart wasn’t in the law,” she says. “I ended up doing an internship with Bombardier, in Derby, which is where I’m from. I looked at project management and saw what was involved. I later applied for the Network Rail graduate scheme.” In 2023 she received the Judges’ Special Mention in the Young Project Professional of the Year category at the APM Project Management Awards.

Absorbed in her work

She relishes the ability to help millions of people. “Working in R&D means I can come up with ideas for how to improve things and influence the direction of the project. Not all project managers get to say that.” It’s telling that she says her biggest challenge right now is switching off. “I need to improve my workload balance,” she says. “I find the technology so interesting. I want to get involved as much as the engineers. But it’s important to know where the role of project manager stops. You’ve got to prioritise the important things.”

The R&D team are currently juggling 150 projects to add sparkle to the UK rail network. A five-year control period is about to expire, at

list of stakeholders. “Yes, the rail network is complicated!” she says. “There are 20 TOCs, or train operating companies. We love acronyms in rail. These manage our stations and interface with passengers. The Rail Delivery Group is an organisation that represents the TOCs and helps us maintain contact.” Network Rail itself is split into a central team and regional team. “It’s almost like different companies,” says Davies. “We all need to coordinate

CLAIRE WOOD

CV: SOPHIE DAVIES

Job: Project Manager,
Network Rail

Education: BA in law,
University of Birmingham

Qualifications:

- Lean practitioner,
The Knowledge Academy
- APM PMQ
- PRINCE2 Foundation and
Practitioner level

which point a new phase will begin. There will be new ideas and new projects for Davies to grapple with.

Davies says she's only getting started: "It's such a rewarding career. You are never pigeon-holed. There's always something new." So while the rest of us may not be able to fix those annoyances that crop up on our rail journeys, at least we'll know there's a project manager hard at work on our behalf. "It's a constant challenge," says Davies. "I enjoy it. I'm a problem solver at heart."

SOPHIE'S TOP TIPS

1 Share lessons learned

Learning from your mistakes is massively important. In projects there will always be challenges. In R&D, you may fail. What you need to do is ensure you understand why things went wrong so it never happens again. A lessons learned session also means you can learn from the mistakes of others. The best way to do it is to have a workshop with the key stakeholders when a project ends. You might have the project manager, the programme manager, the sponsor of the project and technical leads. You brainstorm what went well and what didn't. Did we try to mitigate the problem or did we just let it happen? We draw up conclusions in a document and then share it. This creates a structure around lessons learned.

2 Use software

My favourite tool is Trello. It's basically a Kanban tool. You have different kinds of boards and can structure it how you want. The way I use it is to have a different board for each project. Within each project you can have different tasks. I use it like a giant to-do list. With Trello I can keep track of everything we need to accomplish in a single place,

"It's such a rewarding career. You are never pigeon-holed. There's always something new"



logging actions. Without it, I'm not sure how people cope. I manage five or six projects at a time and need a system to keep track. Trello also allows others to interact with it, so we use it to coordinate what we do.

3 Block out uninterrupted time

Do not allow meetings to be scheduled at times when you need to focus on a single task. Block out chunks of your day with no interruptions. I am strict about this. The busier you get the more important it becomes. This includes blocking out time for things such as your lunch break. There is a bad habit in England of eating lunch at your desk. I am a health and wellbeing ambassador at Network Rail and encourage people to organise their day to reduce stress, and this includes booking time for themselves.

4 Set development goals

One of my mentors told me to set three goals. There should be an experience goal. For example, you could set a target of managing a software development project, if you've never done that. There should be a knowledge goal of improving

your technical understanding. And the third goal should be related to behavioural skills. For example, I wanted to develop as a line manager. I made it my objective and now I have a scheme with someone working under me to give me that development. It's one of the most useful pieces of advice I've ever received.

5 Ask for feedback

If you don't ask for feedback you may not get any, which will slow your progress. It can feel a bit cringey to request feedback. My view is you've got to do it. Every six months, or once a year, ask colleagues to fill in a feedback form. Ours at Network Rail is called a 360° Feedback Form. It asks them to mention what things I should start doing in my role, anything I should stop doing and anything I'm doing well. Ask for constructive feedback – comments that can be acted on. I had a manager who said, "You've got great ideas, but you need to make sure they are heard." I was at the start of my career and it was something I really needed to be told, to have the confidence to say things. Feedback is great at opening your eyes to this kind of thing.

PUBLIC REGISTER OF ChPPs

The following individuals make up the latest cohort to achieve Chartered Project Professional status with APM. Congratulations to you all, from those based in the UK and Canada to Australia and Azerbaijan! Full details of the criteria for achieving chartered status and the routes to get there can be found at apm.org.uk/chartered-standard, where you can also view the full Register of Chartered Project Professionals.



Name	Country	Name	Country	Name	Country	Name	Country
Abayomi Ajileye	UK	Charles Frampton	UK	Jonathan Matcham	UK	Tom Seymour	UK
Sam Akeroyd	UK	Ryan Francis	UK	Andy Maxwell	UK	Kristofer Shields	UK
Gir Alam	UK	Maria Gabaldon	UK	Alan McKenzie	UK	Subeagh Singh	UK
Paul Allen	UK	Ines Galvao	NLD	Randy Mill	US	James Smith	UK
Ruth Amaning	UK	Kevin George	UK	David Milner	UK	Andrew Solman	UK
Biagio Arancio	UK	Nicola Goldup	UK	Stefan Milosevic	UK	Ashlee Spooner	UK
Alexander Auld	UK	Benjamin Grainger	UK	Virginia Molina Asenjo	UK	Rory Stewart	UK
Nathalia Bailey	UK	Joanne Grant	UK	Timothy Moore	UK	Joanne Sullivan	UK
Alan Beattie	UK	Michael Green	UK	Adam Morris	UK	Jack Sweet	UK
Thomas Benn	UK	Georgie Greenwood	UK	Richard Nesbitt	UK	Sarah Tapper	UK
Amanda Bissekler	UK	Jeroen		Geert Nijhout	NLD	Waleed Tariq	UK
Matthew Body	UK	Groenenboom	NLD	Cornelius O'Brien	DEU	Hannah	
Paul Boyce	UK	Helen Haigh	UK	Kevin Owen	UK	Taylor-Hemingway	UK
Luke Peter Bridgen	UK	Hussein Hallal	UAE	Yan Tai Pang	UK	Vikash Thakur	UK
Kerry Burke	UK	Steven Hamilton	US	Karen Parkes	UK	Niruja Thiyagan	UK
David Burnett	UK	Charlotte Hardcastle	UK	Liam Parkin	UK	Aleksander	
Russell Butcher	UK	Karl Hart	UK	Christopher Parkinson	UK	Tomasiewicz	UK
Robert Cameron	UK	Michael Hitchcock	UK	Sara Passone	US	Amanda Torode	UK
Robert Clark	UK	Paul Hodgson	UK	Mayuresh Patil	UK	Sharon Towner	AUS
Ian Clarkson	UK	Amy Hulley	UK	Rick Pearce	UK	Paul Tritton	UK
Tricia Cole	UK	Paul Hutton	UK	Olivia Perry	UK	Kay Vickers	IRE
John Coles	UK	Raminder Jaswal	UK	Kumar Pillai	UK	Richard Vincent	UK
Sandi Cooper	UK	Andrew Johannesen	UK	Rebecca		John Ware	UK
Mohamoud Dadey	UK	Glenda Joseph	UK	Plummeridge	UK	Phil West	AUS
Kewal Dass	UK	Dina Khater	UK	David Preston	UK	Dominic Wheatley	UK
Tyrone Davids	UK	Prital Lad	UK	Rebecca Pursey	UK	Hilary Williams	UK
Cally		Richard Lamb	UK	Sabina Rattan	UK	Paul Williams	UK
Davidson-Middlemas	UK	Ines Lehmann	UK	Simon Reid	UK	Gail Willis Smith	UK
John Denney	UK	Olivia Leu	UK	Melissa Reynard	UK	Andrew Withers	UK
Colin James Dixon	UK	Oliver Lewis	UK	Ian Richardson	UK	Gareth Wooler	CHN
Cameron Dudley	UK	Duncan Lilley	UK	Charles Rickett	UK	Trent Yackimec	US
Davina Duggan	UK	Charlotte Ludford	UK	Michael Rizk	UK	Narmin Zulfugarova	AZE
Paul Dundee	UK	Vishan		Nathan Roberts	UK		
Carl Elam	UK	Manickchand	CAN	Thomas Salisbury	UK		
Ian Elder	UK	Iain Manson	UK	David Salmond	UK		
Michael Scott Evans	UK	Andrew Marsden	UK	Alexander Sargent	UK		
Bronwyn Field	AUS	Wedzerayi Alex		Andrew Schuster	CAN		
Benjamin Foster	NLD	Mashangu	ZWE	Timothy Searle	UK		

DEAR SUSANNE

As a young female project manager, I'm not always treated with equal authority by clients and senior colleagues. What should I do when my views are dismissed or my experience questioned?



Susanne Madsen is an internationally recognised project leadership coach, trainer and consultant. She is the author of *The Project Management Coaching Workbook* and *The Power of Project Leadership*. For more information, visit www.susannemadsen.com

You describe a situation that many people experience irrespective of age, race or gender. Unfortunately, some people have a tendency to put others down by criticising them or minimising their points of view. In most cases it's an unconscious pattern that serves to cover up their own insecurities and elevate their position. Whereas this doesn't justify their behaviour, it means that you shouldn't necessarily take their actions personally.

Boost your competence and come prepared

Your best defence may be your own inner confidence and your ability to come across as a strong and competent project manager. The more competence and confidence you have, the less likely you are to be subjected to scrutiny. Even if you lack in experience, there is a lot you can do to increase your abilities. Educate yourself about project management and about the subject matter. Understanding the context of the business you're working in commands respect.

It is also important to come prepared to meetings. Ask yourself what your stakeholders are most likely to be concerned with and research ways to address those concerns before the meeting. Many younger employees have a narrow focus on the task in front of them, whereas senior staff are better able to see the bigger picture. The perspective you show up with is a function of your level of knowledge and experience, coupled with the quality of the questions you ask. Many project managers ask questions about how to get the work done and

overcome current obstacles. To impress senior stakeholders, also show that you're future oriented and that you're concerned about risks, benefits and change management. For instance: what needs to happen for our users to get the most benefit from our product in the long term?

Communicate clearly and don't minimise yourself

Be mindful of your attitude and communication style. The best way to ensure you're treated equally is by feeling in your heart that you are indeed equals. If you feel inferior, others will pick up on it and may take advantage. Fill up your cup of self-worth from the inside. Be reminded of your skills and strengths and that we're all equal

The best way to ensure you're treated equally is by feeling in your heart that you are indeed equals

at a relational level. If you sense that someone looks down on you, don't crumble. Hold your head high and kill them with kindness. If you feel equal in your own heart and mind, and you deliver good work, you will soon win over your sceptics.

Another tip is to listen carefully to stakeholders; give them your full attention and be clear and honest about the status of the project, the risks, what you need from them and how you will address their concerns. Always deliver on your promises.

Take action when you need to

We have discussed how you can make yourself less exposed to criticism by becoming a competent and confident project manager. But if you find yourself in an unacceptable situation where you're being undermined in spite of your good work and thorough preparation, it's time for another strategy. Depending on your relationship, straight talk may be the only way forward. If someone is consistently undermining you, then you need to calmly express to them how you perceive their actions. Talking to them directly is often much better than escalating to HR or, even worse, getting depressed and blaming yourself. Project work should be fun and based on honest and trusting relationships.

Do you have a question for Susanne? Email mail@susannemadsen.com

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Enjoy a 25% discount on *The Power of Project Leadership*, second edition, when you order the book from Kogan Page at www.koganpage.com
Quote code: PROJ25

PROJECT ME

WE ASK PROJECT PROFESSIONALS HOW THEY DEAL WITH PROJECT AND PERSONAL FAILURE. CAN IT EVER BE A GOOD THING?

Remain calm

Stella Baughan, Manager and Account Lead, Valcon

Anyone who works in project management will know that project failure, and being able to accept and deal with it, is a vital component in the armoury of project professionals. It's like anything in life – if things go well, that's great, but what will really test your mettle and show your value is when things go belly up. I'm a turnaround specialist. Nothing focuses the mind like making success from failure. The most important thing is to remain calm. You also need complete oversight of your project and project team. Mistakes and shortcomings happen and this visibility will help you find a way forward. Openness, transparency, sound communication and a clear vision are essential to build an actionable recovery plan.



Ditch the anxiety

Keith Haward, retired project manager
We all have a primary driver. With me, that driver was fear of failure, fear of getting it wrong. I had a continuous anxiety about everything and anything. It naturally sapped my self-confidence. Because this was so ingrained in my psyche I thought it was just part of my character. I am a practising Christian and, in March 2019, the church sermon was about the cleansing of the lepers. At the end of the service I was prayed for and I literally felt the tension, anxiety and fear – which I had felt for 50 years – drain away. I knew that the fear of failure and humiliation had gone, and I left the service feeling physically lighter and spiritually released. It's been five years since that service and my confidence has continued to build. I don't have that debilitating anxiety that plagued me for years. I hope and pray others can find encouragement from my experience.



Failure is feedback in work clothes

Tim Lyons, Programme Manager, Gestionnaire

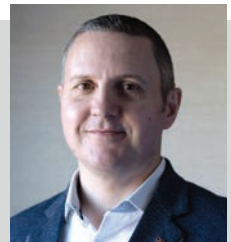
In a project environment, 'failure' means that something was not produced as planned, on time or to cost. In Neurolinguistic Programming, it's held that "there's no such thing as failure, only feedback". I don't agree with that statement, but I do consider that failure is only feedback in work clothes. It's important to remember that failure in the project sense usually means in a particular context (deliverable, timing, cost, etc.). Outside of that context, there may well be a value in the work done, as it may have application somewhere else. Also, the you that worked hard at whatever has turned out not quite right has become better for the experience and hopefully more informed for the next one. Being paralysed by fear of failure spells death to project management. Keep the faith!



Lessons from mountain biking

Marc Roberts, Chief Operating Officer, BBI Services

In the exhilarating world of mountain biking, the parallels between project management and conquering rugged trails offer valuable insights. Preparation reigns supreme. Just as in project management, meticulous planning and risk assessment are fundamental. Pack only what is necessary to inspire confidence without unnecessary weight, mirroring the essence of effective resource management. Maintaining your bike is akin to project upkeep. Regular check-ups prevent potential failures and ensure a smooth ride, highlighting the importance of consistent maintenance in both spheres. But perhaps most crucial is mindset – commitment, confidence and focus. Full dedication to the chosen path and a proactive approach significantly reduce errors, akin to the unwavering dedication required for project success. In mountain biking, as in project management, a well-prepared mind and a strategic approach pave the way for triumph on challenging terrain and intricate projects alike.





Analyse rather than avoid

Louisa Daniel-Bille, MSc project management student, University of Sunderland

Learning to grow from failure has been a cornerstone of my personal and professional development. Initially, every failure felt like a deep setback. Over time my perspective shifted. I began to see these failures not as defeats, but as rich, albeit challenging, learning opportunities.

Analysing my failures, rather than avoiding them, became a powerful tool for self-improvement. It helped me identify areas where I needed growth. Seeking feedback also played a vital role. It opened me up to different perspectives. Each failure taught me a bit more about persistence, adaptability and the strength that comes from overcoming challenges. Perhaps most importantly, I learned the value of self-compassion. Treating myself kindly in the face of failure helped me maintain a balanced perspective and fostered a resilient spirit.

Failure as a shared opportunity for growth

Tamlyn Lingham, Senior Construction Project Manager, Mace Group

As a senior manager, the human aspect of coping with failure is pivotal, grounded in empathy and effective leadership. Confronted with setbacks, I approach them with understanding and compassion, fostering an environment where both my team and I perceive failure as a shared opportunity for growth. I leverage openness and vulnerability as powerful tools, sharing personal experiences of overcoming failure to create camaraderie and instil honesty within the team. My advice centres on continual learning and adaptation. I encourage leading with empathy, comprehending each team member's unique journey. Communication is paramount, advocating for open, non-judgemental discussions where failures are seen as opportunities for collective learning. Additionally, I highlight the significance of celebrating both big and small successes, offering a means of building resilience and reinforcing a positive team spirit. Through embracing failure with empathy, we collectively transform challenges into stepping stones towards shared success.



Fail forward

Mark Smith FAPM

Celebrate failure! We all recognise the benefits of celebrating project success, which inspires and rewards our project teams, motivating them to overcome the next set of challenges.



But what should we do if the project has just been cancelled or has encountered a major setback? While the celebration of a project failure may be lower key than a success, it should still contain the same features: senior management recognition, a period of recovery for the team and coming together with a team event. It is the time to recognise each other's best efforts, recognise the lessons learned and encourage the team to 'fail forward', without blaming themselves or others for what has happened. We know that 'success has many parents, failure is an orphan', so let's look after all our project offspring, recognise the time we've spent together and how this has made us better able to deliver the next big project.



Are you brave enough?

Theresa Gear, Head of Business Improvement, Gattaca

No matter how much planning goes into a project there is always the risk of deviating often due to the number of stakeholders/external influences that can come into effect. Here's my advice: acceptance and reflection are key. Conduct a thorough analysis of the failure, have subsequent continuous improvement and conduct regular project reviews to assess progress and identify potential issues.

Remember to encourage open communication and a culture of learning from mistakes – and foster an environment where failures are seen as opportunities for growth. Learning from project failures is an ongoing process. By embracing failures as learning experiences, project managers can continuously improve their skills, enhance project outcomes and build a resilient and successful project management approach. If there are no project failures, question yourself... are you being brave enough?

PROJECT: RENOVATE A 120-YEAR-OLD COTTAGE IN WALES

OLIVIA WILLIAMS USED AGILE TECHNIQUES TO TRANSFORM A DILAPIDATED STONE BUILDING IN AN IDYLIC LOCATION

In 2022, I bought a 120-year-old cottage in the heart of picturesque mid-Wales, with sweeping views across the Teifi Valley. The stone-built house stands atop six acres of land from where you can see large trees, birds and the weather fronts rolling in. Down in the meadow, amid the streams, you'll see butterflies, moths and dragonflies flitting by, and frogs leaping.

The house itself hadn't been upgraded for years, yet had been loved by a husband and wife, with the former well known in the area as Gwyn Blodau (*blodau* meaning 'flowers' in Welsh) due to his successes in local horticultural shows. The property encompasses wildflower meadows, woodland, a section of disused steam-railway track, a large stone bridge and the 'river field', which is abutted by the Teifi River. The river is home to fish such as lamprey, stickleback, mullet, eel, *sewin* (brown trout) and salmon. Several species of warbler nest along the river's edge; herons breed nearby and visit the river to fish. Otters and water shrews are present in the marshes, and populations of both sika and red deer are growing in the vicinity.

Uncovering lost work

The initial challenges were apparent, as the house, long left uninhabited, revealed signs of its age. However, a surveyor's report indicated that the structure was solid and hadn't warped. An asbestos removal company took

down all of the ceilings, revealing vaulted rooms full of oak beams. We set about removing the original lath and animal hair plaster, then called upon local tradespeople to help once we'd hit mid-winter and our early gusto started to wane.

Sandblasting the walls and beams revealed artisan markings, many of which were



I have observed that people are the linchpins of both my work life and renovation life

quickly covered up again thanks to 'deposits' left by a family of swallows. Then there was the 1960s fireplace that needed demolishing and brickwork picking out in order to reveal large and original fireplaces. We dug down, revealing hints of the blue slate floors common to the area, and found intact slate hearths. We wheelbarrowed out tonnes of debris.

Outside, contractors have dug a pond, flattened a portion of the

slope immediately behind the cottage to make the beginnings of a lawn, and put in drainage to steer rainwater off the mountain behind the house. I've been managing the woodland, trusty chainsaw in hand. Ash dieback has facilitated my gathering of firewood, and overhanging branches and trees have been cut back, giving remaining species the opportunity to thrive. A central cog in the renovation machine has been my architect Geraint of GP Architecture Studio, based in West Wales, who embraced my eye-opening request for a 'James Bond lair, within a *Jurassic Park* landscape and with a hint of boutique vineyard'. His skill in mixing historic renovation with the contemporary has given me beautiful designs full of glass and metal, black cladding and stone.

People are the common link

Managing projects efficiently while holding space for creativity, collaboration and fun is, to me, a vital element of a successful project. In my role as a consultant at Apache iX, a defence sector SME based in Bristol, and my adopted role of cottage renovator, I have observed that people are the linchpins of both my work life and renovation life. Significant parallels exist between activities across both domains.

These include: working to create mental spaces where stakeholders can contribute and flourish; embracing 180-degree changes to requirements as opportunities to



Taking a little longer to contemplate a decision will ultimately stand you in better stead than if you're a slave to the timeline

innovate; speeding up and slowing down timescales to respond to capacity; testing assumptions about materials by timeboxing discovery sessions; and delivering often to ensure there's always a sense of progress. I also measure progress at regular intervals; combine technology with traditional mechanisms (e.g. replacing old radiators with underfloor heating); and check in with the end user (i.e. me) to ensure that my needs will be met by the decisions made at different project intervals.

A core component of a successful project is also consistent interpersonal communication. We all have preferred ways to communicate and this is also the case for professional tradespeople. A quick response is more likely to be garnered from the electrician via text, the builder via face-to-face conversations and the Planning Officer via email. Meanwhile, portions of the renovation can only be pursued by submitting official forms online and engaging with standard protocols, as was the case with obtaining Standard Assessment Procedure results

(the UK government's National Calculation Methodology for assessing the energy performance of dwellings) to justify the increase of the front elevation acoustic barrier and augment the thermal upgrade.

A project to blossom in spring

Managing the budget effectively is also an exercise in agility, allowing decisions to be made by considering the evidence instead of personal preference. Requesting quotes from each trade maintains a healthy level of competition within the local economy. Having been empty for years, the cottage is eligible for a £25,000 grant as part of the National Empty Homes Grant Scheme. Yet, while an incredible resource, tapping into this fund can potentially hinder the overall project's agility due to stipulations of the Scheme.

I have learned that enjoyment of the process has to take precedence over everything else, and taking a little longer to contemplate a decision will ultimately stand you in better stead than if you're a slave to the timeline. The cottage is now

Once at risk of fading into obscurity, this old rural cottage has been given a new lease of life thanks to some TLC (and project management know-how) courtesy of Olivia

undergoing its metamorphosis, becoming a space where history and contemporary living can coexist. I like to think that the quiet impact of this project extends far beyond the physical structure, becoming a living part of the community's collective memory, as neighbours stop to ask how things are going or share a memory of a previous inhabitant.

This historic dwelling, once at risk of fading into obscurity, is now on the cusp of a renaissance, a revival which contributes to the shaping of the landscape within the Teifi Valley. Gwyn Blodau, now an elderly gentleman living in a neighbouring county, sends his best wishes and I'm looking forward to seeing the bulbs he planted many moons ago emerge and blossom in spring.

Olivia Williams is Information Security and Strategic Analysis Consultant at Apache iX

OFFLINE

WHERE PROJECT
MANAGEMENT MEETS
POPULAR CULTURE

Bill & Ted's EXCELLENT Adventure

BILL AND TED DO END UP RUNNING A MOST EXCELLENT PROJECT, WRITES RICHARD YOUNG – BUT WE SAVE OUR BIGGEST CHEERS FOR PROJECT DIRECTOR RUFUS, A MOST OUTSTANDING ORGANISATIONAL LEADER

It's a lesson project managers often learn the hard way: never go back. Once you walk away from a project, trying to recreate past successes on the same old territory often just leads to disappointment. Don't wallow in nostalgia, seek out the new!

It's advice Keanu Reeves (Ted) and Alex Winter (Bill) should have heeded. The reboot of their *Bill & Ted* characters in 2020 yielded a box-office take of just US\$6m (albeit in pandemic-hit cinemas), while their original outing, *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure*, minted US\$40m – about US\$100m in today's money. That was 35 years ago, but some of the project management on show is as fresh today as Keanu's face was back in 1989 when the film launched his career into orbit.

The premise: Bill Preston (Winter) and Ted Logan (Reeves) are suburban students more focused on their metal band Wyld Stallyns than their studies. But when their history teacher threatens to flunk them out of school unless they get an A in their history presentation – which will mean Ted going off to military school, so breaking up the band – they fall into a funk.

Luckily, future civilisation depends on them writing a song that changes humanity's self-perception. So when time travel is developed in the year 2688,

a world leadership council sends back adviser Rufus (George Carlin) to help keep the band together and save the future. Bill and Ted use his phonebooth time machine to tour history, aiming to learn about the past and bring notable figures back to San Dimas in 1988 to do their history assignment. Project management is rarely so clear-cut in the movies. So what skills do they deploy?

Dependency management

Bill and Ted don't need to be schooled by Rufus on project dependencies. We meet them struggling to make a music video. "We won't be a triumphant band without Van Halen," they realise after accepting they can't play very well and need a guitar legend to help. "And that can't happen without a triumphant video, and that means we need decent instruments, but to play them we need Van Halen, and we can't get him without a triumphant video!"

Okay, so the logic is a little circular, but at least they can see this music project demands more than just gnarly camera work. The history project is more of a mystery to them. "The only history you seem to have learned is that Caesar is 'a salad dressing dude'," says their history teacher. Initial attempts at revision for the next day founder. What they need is a bit of leadership...

Project leadership

Enter Rufus, a classic project management office chief. He's focused on the long-term, strategic implications of the project. This history assignment is just a part – albeit a critical one – of a much bigger programme, the creation of a just and benevolent civilisation. As project director, he brings resources (the time machine), guidance (on bringing together all the historical figures) and parameters. The project has to be done by the next day, and while his project managers have lacked focus, under his methodology, they get to work.

Crucially, he doesn't micro-manage. His instructions are simple and brief. The ground rules and objective are clear, he explains how to use the tools, then he gets out of the way. This is most excellent leadership – not only helping the project team focus, but also ensuring they learn through trial and error.

Handling objections

We all know that lots of people in organisations really don't like change and block projects. So who's the stick-in-the-mud for Bill and Ted? Like any good 1980s teen flick, it's an authority figure, in this case Ted's police captain father. We know he's the business-as-usual resister because even when Ted pops home



On most projects, relevant expertise from outside the organisation can be a massive help. Bill and Ted have accidentally kidnapped Napoleon...

to leave Napoleon in the care of his brother Deacon and explains to dad that he's on a mission to ace his history project, the old bore tries to ground him. He slips away and continues his time travels.

Team building

Most project managers build skills outside of their CPD in specialist areas – construction; technology; whatever, dude. But on most projects, relevant expertise from outside the organisation can be a massive help. Bill and Ted have accidentally kidnapped Napoleon, who was blown into their time-stream when they were trying out the phone booth (every mistake on a project should be treated as an opportunity). And Bony's presence gives them the idea of bringing along loads of notable names to offer their opinions of San Dimas in 1988 – the theme of the history project.

What follows is a whistle-stop tour through the past, with mini-lessons in project management at each stop:

New Mexico, 1879: Bill and Ted bump into Billy the Kid and accidentally start a bar fight. Our dudes are smart project managers: they don't join in the fight, watching to seize their moment to bring Billy with them. In other words, don't get bogged down in the day-to-day project squabbles until you have to; stay focused on the ultimate outcome.

If you have a team unaware of both the big goal and their specific role in achieving it, you're asking for trouble

Athens, 410BCE: Socrates is orating in Greek. But like proficient project managers, Bill and Ted have briefed themselves on his thinking before the meeting, so their sign language is contextualised and their comms are clear.

England, 15th century: Bill and Ted have a slip-up when they're deciding (agile style) on a stage gate objective – which medieval Englander to grab. They get distracted by some princess “babes” they meet. Rescuing them from a forced marriage becomes a side project that distracts them, reminding us that on a deadline you can't goof around.

Vienna, 1901: welcoming Sigmund Freud to the team – and with him much-needed emotional intelligence.

Kassel, 1810: bringing in Beethoven for a different skillset, music; ‘diversity’ isn't just about gender, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation and body type...

Orleans, 1429: speaking of diversity, there are about five women in this whole movie, and at least three of them are basically variants on “babes”. At least Joan of Arc is in the crew now.

Outer Mongolia, 1209: to pick up Genghis Khan, who's seduced with a Twinkie cake (performance-related remuneration on this project was never going to be conventional).

Washington, 1863: the final piece of the puzzle? Abe Lincoln.

Then it's back to 1988 in time for the history presentation. One detour: the San Dimas of 2688, to visit the leadership



MENTAL HEALTH FOR BILL & TED

Giving your people tough deadlines and exacting requirements can be a recipe for poor mental health, so it's good that our awareness of overwork and stress are much better now than in 1988. That said, *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure* does include a lovely piece of senior management sensitivity. At the end of the film, we get to see what a brilliant project director Rufus is. He comes to congratulate Bill and Ted and reintroduces them to the princesses they met earlier. Rufus has saved them from their forced marriage (because Bill and Ted were too busy escaping their own execution) and they've come to join Wyld Stallyns. Rufus saw how overworked his project managers were and stepped in to take one important side project off their plate. We have a lot of love for a leader who can see when their people are struggling and applies their own experience and skill to make things easier.

council, whose idea this whole thing was. It's a great meeting of project managers and their ultimate sponsors. You would recognise it: the sponsors looking slightly bemused by the whole thing, the project managers stammering and over-explaining, then the meeting ending with little or no clear guidance on progress to date. Still, the people at 'head office' seem very happy to hear Bill and Ted say “Party on”.

Sharing the project goals

Back in 1988, the unaccompanied historical figures are running riot in the shopping mall. The problem is that Bill and Ted never properly explained to their team what the project is for or what their roles are. No wonder they all go running off to do their own thing! It's the opposite of the clear, concise and unmistakable guidance that project director Rufus gives the pair at the start of the movie. If you have a team unaware of both the big goal and their specific role in achieving it, you're asking for trouble.

Luckily Ted's dad rounds them all up in his jail. Bill and Ted do what every good project manager should when confronted

with blockers: go around them! They use Ted's dad's own prejudices and their own unique project methodology (the time machine) to trick him, break the team out and head to school.

On budget, to spec, by the deadline

Our excellent dudes get their project over the line – but only just. They're almost out of time, and the presentation seems to get off to a rocky start. But by applying their innate showmanship – and heavy metal licks – to the situation, they manage to get all the historical figures to say something about the San Dimas of 1988. Bill and Ted get their A+ and the day is saved.

It's a reminder that it's not enough to spec your project right – you have to sell it, too, if you're going to get the credit you deserve. Because, in the end, while Bill and Ted have wowed the audience of teachers and students, they've shown very little personal knowledge of history. Sure, they ticked the boxes for the project requirements, and as far as their ultimate sponsors in 2688 are concerned, the strategic goal has been met. But it's the razzmatazz that seals the deal at the sign-off meeting. And who can object to a project ethos like “Be excellent to each other”? As they say, “Party on, dudes...”



NEW BOOKS, RECOMMENDED FAVOURITES AND PODCASTS TO KEEP YOU ENTERTAINED

HOW TO OVERCOME THOSE TROUBLESOME FRICTION POINTS IN ORGANISATIONS OR PROGRAMMES, AND HOW WE CAN ACT AS AGENTS OF POSITIVE SOCIAL IMPACT

The Friction Project: How smart leaders make the right things easier and the wrong things harder



Robert I Sutton & Huggy Rao (Penguin)

The Friction Project is a real eye-opener. The authors superbly package up something we all knew existed but couldn't

put our finger on into a well-articulated concept that you can no longer unsee. With real-life examples of where friction has been experienced and fixed by people they term 'friction fixers', they highlight the simple but important aim of making it easy to do the right things and difficult to do the wrong things in any organisation.

This book is a must-read and could serve as a reference guide for those involved in business change and transformation, as well as anyone who is frustrated by unnecessary hurdles in their organisation and wants to do something about it.

Wherever you have sat in an organisation, you will have experienced friction – where some of the right things to do are surrounded by so much red tape that there is the temptation to take shortcuts just to get things done. This frustration led Sutton and Rao to research the causes, consequences and remedies for friction troubles in organisations and share the stories, belief systems and solutions that friction fixers use to eliminate them.

They document their findings with many examples and at times quite colourful language, which, to be fair, is probably what we are all thinking – from present-day friction fixers to people from

She encourages us to aim high with our strategies, but says: "The magic is in the implementation"

the past they also highlight who made good use of friction to slow things down on purpose to achieve an outcome as part of the long game.

The pacing of the book is probably its only weakness. The authors hit you with practical examples at such a pace that you often find yourself re-reading a section for fear of missing something important. *The Friction Project* is a pacy, well-researched and well-written book and I commend the authors for packing in so much practical and useful advice that will make a significant difference in the organisations of those who read it and are brave enough to become friction fixers.

Review by **Emeka Okorochoa**,
Managing Partner at iStrat Consulting



What is a Social Impact?

Ildiko Almasi Simsic (Cap de Nice Press)



This book has helped me understand a complex and sometimes inaccessible subject that, in truth, none of us can afford not to understand. As Simsic eloquently says: "The

world is complex and interconnected. It's more important than ever to understand that our daily decisions influence our communities and, indirectly, this world we live in." Simsic describes the scale of this complexity in a way that does it justice, but without it feeling overwhelming or hopeless. Far from it. She advocates that we can all act as agents of social impact, and she brings to life how, including some excellent pointers to currently available tech products.

The key point is that *we can* act. This shines a light on the choices we can make (and do make, whether we realise

it or not) every day, and our ability to act as agents of positive social impact. Another vitally important aspect that Simsic highlights is the need for action. She encourages us to aim high with our strategies, but says: “The magic is in the implementation. What’s often missing is a plan to implement actions to achieve the goals under the strategy or the policy.” These principles resonate deeply with me, in the leadership of the Infrastructure and Projects Authority’s Transforming Infrastructure Performance (TIP) programme, and it’s why we are driving hard at implementing TIP as business as usual by 2025.

Simsic’s first-hand experience of working with displaced communities, her care for people and the importance of them having access to natural resources, is palpable throughout the book. However, perhaps what doesn’t come through strongly enough, and the next stage in this discussion, is how much the climate and nature crises will exacerbate any social issue. I talked this through with someone I respect greatly in this field, Illana Adamson, who helped me understand the duality of the problems and the interdependencies of social and environmental impacts. But she also describes the positive shift she is seeing in places, across both public and private sector, from traditional business thinking to a far more resilient approach for people and the planet.

So this exploration into *What is a Social Impact?* has been incredibly valuable. I understand the problem better, what I can choose to do positively, and that this is not a destination but an ongoing journey. As Simsic says, “a journey fuelled by passion, purpose, and the relentless pursuit of a better world”. Hear hear.

Review by Dr Jo Jolly, Head of Project Futures, Infrastructure and Projects Authority



My Bedside Books

Narinderpal Sindhar, Project Manager, Heathrow Airport

Legacy

James Kerr (Constable)

This book analyses the most successful rugby team in the world, New Zealand’s All Blacks. It looks into various reasons why they are successful and what they do to stay at the top of their game. This is a great reference book, giving 15 lessons in leadership that aid those looking to lead, or who are already leading, teams. It’s an inspiring and easy read that has helped me with my leadership skills as a project manager.

The Secret

Rhonda Byrne (Simon & Schuster)

The book is based on a 2006 documentary film with the same name that is about visualisation, gratitude and the law of attraction. There are many people who are mentioned throughout the book who have managed to make things

appear in their lives by following simple steps, purely by thinking about what you want, and they explain how to do this. The author also shares a three-step process: ask, believe and receive. I found the book a little difficult to get into at first, but once I got into it I couldn’t put it down.

The Mind Gym: Wake Up Your Mind (Sphere)

The book has five sections: taking control, the right impression, tough conversations, stress and relaxation, and creative juices. It’s not a typical cover-to-cover read. You can essentially take any one of the sections in isolation to help with your current priorities. Alternatively, there is a questionnaire that can help you decide which sections are most relevant. It’s a gym for the mind that helps you grow and improve both personally and professionally.

We’re all ears – podcasts to listen to

APM Podcast

There’s a decidedly cultural feel to our latest podcasts. First up is an interview with Rachel Baldwin of the BBC, who explains what it’s like leading IT and technology projects at the broadcaster, and why her previous career as a documentary maker has held her in good stead. Follow this with our three-part series on the National Trust, where we go behind the scenes to discover how the professionalisation of project management within the charity is making for more successful projects, from the transformation of historic Dyrham Park to the creation of a community garden.

The Big Dig

The project that Bostonians call ‘The Big Dig’ was infamous for its ever-increasing price tag. This massive highway tunnelling effort was once ridiculed, but decades later the story looks more complicated. So how did the narrative around this project develop? And what lessons can it offer today? This nine-episode series is hosted by Ian Coss.

Tortoise: The Slow Newscast

This podcast takes a story in the headlines and delves deep. Its episode ‘Ignition: The quest for nuclear fusion’ tells the story of the decades leading up to 5 December 2022, when a pulse was fired, achieving the nuclear fusion scientists had been seeking for more than half a century. It could solve an energy crisis that’s becoming existential for humanity.

Project nightmares are no barrier to success

EDDIE OBENG LISTS THE DIFFERENT MONSTERS THAT PROJECT MANAGERS NEED TO SLAY TO DELIVER A DREAM PROJECT



Professor Eddie Obeng HonFAPM is an educator, TED speaker and author. You can join his masterclasses, courses and workshops on the QUBE #SuperReal campus: <https://QUBE.cc>

We know through experience that an uninspired year gives little to celebrate later. That's why we make resolutions. Our organisations call their resolutions 'strategies' and 'visions'.

Did last January hold a dream of a better project future for you? The new year has already seen more uncertainty. Infrastructure investment has taken a downward step. Productivity and profit growth remains flat. Unimaginative CEOs are replacing people with artificial intelligence, and we know project leaders are high on their lists.

We also know that despite continued professionalisation and education we're still far from consistently delivering perfect projects, and that although more organisations are making project delivery core to their operations, we're still unable to guarantee complete success.

Parallels with mass manufacturing

I remember the days when there was an oil patch under every car as the oil sumps always leaked. The manufacturing sector began with master craftsmen who always delivered perfectly, but to scale up and grow, products made by less skilled people using machines produced inferior products that had to be mass marketed. Defect levels were measured in percentages. Automation and quality control got the levels down to parts per thousand. Once that was the norm, complacency set in. Sceptical executives and scoffing managers would insist it was impossible to produce perfect products.

Is this where we are today with projects? Because in manufacturing the next stage was a paradigm change. A new systemic approach was used that paid attention to the interplay between people, culture, machinery, measurement and consistency. Total quality management and Six Sigma reduced defects down to parts per million. Perfect!

Assorted nightmare creatures

Has your dream, like mine, been replaced by nightmares?

The **ProjectGeist** emerges when people forget that change is not improvement. Improvement only occurs when the change moves towards your goals. Which stakeholders define business goals? Whenever the project is not embedded in the organisational needs the project does not create lasting value. Instead it hangs about, stinking and spooking everyone while providing no benefits.

The **WereProject** is green on review day, but red all month. The project leader who watches the fire start, adds it to the risk log and escalates it, then fans the flames while noisily wielding the fire extinguisher, gets the praise. Your metrics are meaningless. Use a baseline – 'what would happen anyway were there no project manager?' – and push it to 'preliminate to perform' to prevent the initial spark. The silver bullet here is to avoid measurements that encourage poor outcomes.

The **ZomProject** is a plodding, unstoppable disaster that eats the

brains of anyone it touches! You have to drop a ton of just-in-time learning on it. No project leader scored 100% on their professional exams, and teams lack capabilities, so quickly audit for knowledge and skills gaps. Fill them during the project. Stop the old-world method of performance managing (firing) them after they mess up!

It's one myopic, glassy eye that can't see what's nearby, let alone what's around the corner. That's the **CycloProject**, but how do you know when you're in one? Did you spend the last Teams call reviewing the past with only a few minutes to think: what next? In our new world it makes more sense to drive by looking through the windshield than to navigate by staring at the rear-view mirror.

Until you change the culture of the project organisation, you will be haunted by the **VamProject**. Use the type of project to define the leadership style, methods and team membership. Don't put an innovator on a closed project; don't have a single approach when on a quest with a clear goal only. Involve stakeholders in dynamically adjusting to circumstances. Create blame-free discovery of the roots of issues. Implement new rituals, such as short drumbeat meetings on the same day each week; write and capture important issues before discussion; always capture who is accountable and keep it public; ensure a single, accessible version of truth; and bring joy and laughter into the project environment that smells of garlic!

Has your dream, like mine, been replaced by nightmares? The first horror is the ProjectGeist. It emerges when people forget that change is not improvement

