MONTHLY MONITOR

February 2019

SUMMARY

+ Brexit update

+ The future of infrastructure

+ The Institute for Government Whitehall Monitor 2019

+ The Good Work Plan

+ HS2

+ Reports, publications, and events across Westminster and Whitehall

+ Reports and publications – professional bodies/think-tanks/other

+ Notable appointments

+ Reports, publications, and activity from the world of project management

+ APM forthcoming

Brexit update
[latest as at time of writing]:

■ Following a delay to the "meaningful vote" over the Christmas period, Theresa May brought her Withdrawal Agreement before the House of Commons at the start of January. The result was an historic defeat for the prime minister – the biggest on record for a British government – with 202 MPs voting for her deal and 432 MPs voting *against* (a majority of 230 votes).

■ Of those voting against were included a majority of MPs representing Leave-voting seats, and a majority of those representing Remain-voting seats. A total of 118 Conservative MPs voted against her deal – representing more than a third of Mrs May's parliamentary party. They were joined by 248 of Labour's 256 MPs, and all the Democratic Unionist party, the Liberal Democrats, and the Scottish National party.

■ After surviving a confidence vote that followed this historic defeat, another vote was scheduled at which a neutral, amendable motion was tabled. Two amendments passed:

□ **Amendment (I)** [in the name of Dame Caroline Spelman]: Provided a straight block on leaving without a deal. This amendment passed by 318 votes to 310.

□ **Amendment (n)** [in the name of Andrew Murrison and Sir Graham Brady]: amends the withdrawal agreement to include "and requires the Northern Ireland backstop to be replaced with alternative arrangements to avoid a hard border; supports leaving the European Union with a deal and would therefore support the Withdrawal Agreement subject to this change." This amendment passed by 317 votes to 301.

Although neither amendment is legally binding, they certainly hold political weight.

■ Speaking after the votes, in a point of order, the prime minister stated: "It is now clear that there is a route that can secure a substantial and sustainable majority in this House for leaving the EU with a deal. We will now take this mandate forward and seek to obtain legally binding changes to the withdrawal agreement that deal with concerns on the backstop while guaranteeing no return to a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland. My colleagues and I will talk to the EU about how we address the House's views." However, the EU already stated that they **will not change the legal text** agreed, with the European Council president Donald Tusk saying: "The backstop is part of the withdrawal agreement, and the withdrawal agreement is not open for renegotiation."

■ Next steps:

□ The prime minister has invited Caroline Spelman, Jack Dromey and others who tabled amendments to prevent a no deal to discuss how to move forward and secure a deal for Brexit.

□ The Brady amendment (amendment n) could help pave the way for the "Malthouse compromise" as an alternative to the backstop. The proposal includes extending the transition period for a year and protecting EU citizens' rights, instead of using the backstop.

□ The prime minister says she will attempt to negotiate a revised deal with Brussels.

□ If no new deal is agreed by parliament by 13 February the prime minister will make a statement and again table an amendable motion for debate the next day.

- Read the Institute for Government's (IfG) report [Brexit: two months to go](#)

The future of infrastructure:

- **AECOM** launched its [Future of Infrastructure report](#) informed by over 10,000 citizens from 10 major cities sharing their views on how satisfied, safe, inspired and engaged there are with their infrastructure networks and services. The research by found that over half of respondents (55 per cent) felt they didn't have the chance to feedback on transport services during the past year, while half of those questioned in London think that when they are asked their opinion, it is too late in the process for their views to have an impact.

Key statistics:

- 60 per cent of Londoners found that using public transport was stressful;

- 38 per cent found public transport in London as unaffordable;

- 23 per cent of citizens rate the reliability of public transport in London as poor or very poor.

Headline findings:

- Many people feel shut out of infrastructure decisions;

- People are willing to pay higher taxes to fund infrastructure improvements;

- Residents feel the private-sector should play a bigger role in city infrastructure;

- Roads, rail and the environment are top improvement priorities;

- Roads and underground rail are the biggest priority, followed by improving environmental sustainability; and

- Boosting resilience against cyberattacks is a pressing concern.

Six lessons on major infrastructure projects:

- **Build on citizens' goodwill** – Greater strategic engagement is needed to secure and maintain citizens' support;

- **Be patient, creative and open** – Authorities must be up front about the costs and the benefits of infrastructure projects;

- **Build confidence through transparency** – Citizens are willing to share their personal data to help bring about improvements in city infrastructure and public services;

- **Learn to share** – Aspiring 'smart' cities benefit from exchanging data and ideas with companies, application developers and other innovators;

- **Tap into the public's green impulses** – Sustainability in the urban environment is a key priority for many people. Prioritising solar power and other green technologies is important; and

- **Adapt to thrive** – Planners who adopt an agile approach can test, design and scale projects at pace.

The Institute for Government Whitehall Monitor 2019:

- [This the sixth](#) in the series of Whitehall Monitors sets out to analyse the size, shape, and performance of the central government of the UK. It aims to help those in charge of government to manage it more effectively, and to help those outside understand it better and hold it to account.

- The Monitor "seeks to present the most comprehensive view of the different organisations (and people) responsible for governing the UK, using data published by government" and it explores political leadership, the civil service workforce, government finances, how public money is managed, legislation, major projects, digital government, communication and transparency, and performance. Among the key headlines of the report are:

- the agenda of the UK government over the past year has been inescapably dominated by Brexit – which has squeezed government's capacity to manage public services and major projects, and to bring about improvement in them;

- Tony Meggs – the chief executive of the Infrastructure Projects Authority – has described implementing Brexit as a "mega-programme", and "the biggest, most challenging peacetime task the civil service has faced." Indeed, across government, there are at least 300 Brexit-related workstreams, spanning 17 departments and agencies. This challenge is exacerbated by the tight deadlines of this task;

- a recent Institute for Government [report](#) argued that "the prime minister must accept that everything will not be ready for December 2020". If the UK leaves without a deal, deadlines for implementing new arrangements would be tighter still. The government could only expect to have 'a fraction' of the necessary processes and systems in place – such as ensuring that the UK complies with international law – by Exit Day;

- while it is impossible to know exactly how many civil servants are working directly on Brexit, in December John Manzoni, chief executive of the civil service told the *public administration and constitutional affairs committee* that 10,000 civil servants were working on Brexit, with up to 5,000 more "in the pipeline";

- the number of civil service staff has grown every year since the EU referendum in 2016 – from a post-war low of **384,260** in June 2016 to **404,160** in September 2018;

- almost a third of civil servants in the Treasury are reported to be working on Brexit "at the expense of everything else." We also see evidence of redeployment – indeed only in December it was reported by Bloomberg that as many as 600 civil servants at the Department for International Development (DfID) were being reassigned elsewhere in Whitehall, and in the last few weeks it has been confirmed that up to 4,000 civil servants from five departments will be moving to new roles to prepare for a no-deal Brexit;

- the Civil Service continues to strengthen and professionalise key activities (such as commercial skills and project delivery) across the whole of government, allowing expertise to be shared across departments and ensuring that it has the specialist skills it needs; and

- while it appears ostensibly that the number of project delivery professionals identified within the Civil Service has increased from **11,450** in the 2018 Monitor to **12,300** in the 2019 Monitor (an increase of 7.5 per cent), it is not possible to make an exact comparison between years given that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) listed all of its professionals as 'unknown' in the 2019 Monitor.

The Good Work Plan:

- In December **HM government** published the Good Work Plan setting out a vision for the future of the UK labour market and how the government will implement the Taylor Review recommendations. The government is bringing forward new legislation to provide further rights to workers and ban unfair practices. **Secretary of State for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy**, Greg Clark wrote to the chair of the Independent Industrial Strategy Council to ask for their views on the measures government could use to measure quality of work in the UK.

- The Good Work Plan "commits to a range of policy and legislative changes to ensure that workers can access fair and decent work, that both employers and workers have the clarity they need to understand their employment relationships, and that the enforcement system is fair and fit for purpose." This includes a commitment to legislate to tackle uncertainty around employment status. Alongside the Good Work Plan HMG also published its response to the first full strategy from the **Director of Labour Market Enforcement**. The government response accepts the majority of the recommendations and sets out the steps the government will take forward on "raising awareness of employment rights, improving intelligence gathering of abuses and strengthening enforcement efforts."

HS2:

- Transport secretary Chris Grayling reiterated his support for HS2 (24 January 2019) in response to the "Stop HS2" campaign and in the face of growing opposition to the project – even among the cabinet. The transport secretary said that scrapping the northern sections of the HS2 rail line "would be a huge betrayal of the people in the Midlands and the north".

- This on the same day as a group of business leaders in the West Midlands signed an open letter calling on Theresa May, Jeremy Corbyn, Vince Cable and Nicola Sturgeon to offer their unwavering support to the project. Those to sign this letter include Midlands Connect, Midlands Engine, Northern Powerhouse Partnership and Core Cities UK.

- Catherine McKinnell, Labour MP for Newcastle North said: "Business, combined authority leaders and MPs across the north-east are rightly concerned that without urgent investment in the next few years, high speed rail risks harming our region rather than benefiting it."

- At the start of January, chief secretary to the Treasury Liz Truss hinted that HS2 could be scrapped to "junk white elephant" projects. Ms Truss will be leading a major spending review this year and has said she will be "examining all major investment projects across government and judging their contribution to future prosperity". However, it is not expected that HS2 will be included in this review, and still has the full support of the transport secretary.

- The **Lords economic affairs select committee** held a one-off oral evidence session (22 January) to discuss the economic case for HS2. This followed a report in 2015, the Case for HS2, and recent announcements that the project would go over budget.

  - During the committee session, Sir Terry Morgan claimed that "nobody knows" what the final cost of the project would be. He continued: "I think the triangle of scope, cost and time – something has to give". This was despite the insistence (in the committee session) of transport minister Nusrat Ghani that HS2 "would be delivered on budget" and that the government would not compromise over cost.

Reports, publications, and events across Westminster and Whitehall:

- The **Department of Health and Social Care** announced the second life sciences sector deal aiming to support healthcare innovation and "back businesses to create high-paid, high-quality jobs."

- The **Department for Transport** and **Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy** announced a new *aerospace sector deal* to develop "Future Flight" through the next generation of electric planes, drones and autonomous aircraft by 2025.

- The **Department for Transport (DfT)** published the government's long-term vision for aviation to 2050 seeking feedback on its green paper which outlines proposals for a new aviation strategy.

  The key themes of the strategy are:

  - to help the aviation industry work for its customers;

  - to ensure a safe and secure way to travel;

  - to build a global and connected Britain;

  - to encourage competitive markets;

- to support growth while tackling environmental impacts; and

- to develop innovation, technology and skills.

The consultation period will run until **11 April 2019** and the final white paper version of the aviation strategy will be published by the middle of 2019.

■ The **House of Commons public administration and constitutional affairs select committee** questioned Sir Mark Sedwill, cabinet secretary and head of the civil service and John Manzoni, chief executive of the Civil Service and permanent secretary of the Cabinet Office on the work of the cabinet secretary.

■ A significant portion of the session covered Brexit, with the two witnesses explaining the preparations the Civil Service had undertaken. Discussion covered the additional resources that had been put in place, with Mr Sedwill and Mr Manzoni defending the role of civil servants in the Brexit process arguing they had acted impartially throughout. Outside of Brexit, the session also covered the priorities of the Civil Service and the provision of learning and development for officials.

■ The **House of Commons public accounts committee** published its [report](#) on government accounts.

■ The **House of Commons treasury committee** [launched an inquiry](#) into the future of the UK's financial services.

■ The **House of Commons work and pensions committee** published the [government's response](#) to the committee's 20th report on Universal Credit: managed migration.

■ The **Department for Transport** also announced a [rail sector deal](#) aiming to deliver improvements in three areas:

- the passenger experience – driving greater capacity on the railways and increasing data sharing;

- the economy – to make more effective use of the UK's existing network capacity to move goods between suppliers, manufactures and customers reliably and efficiently; and

- the rail industry supply chain – seeking to make the railway supply chains more focused, efficient, productive and confident, with investment in skills, stock and capital equipment.

■ Furthermore, the **Department for Transport** published its report [Government Support Measures for Domestic Air Connectivity](#) reviewing government support measures for domestic air connectivity in Australia, Canada, Japan, Norway, Sweden and the United States. The report analyses different approaches to providing regional connectivity in terms of their effectiveness in reaching government policy goals as well as value-for-money considerations.

Key findings:

- Government investment to increase the size of the local market, notably through improvements to surface access, can help increase demand at regional airports;

- government investments in new capacity at constrained national hub airports may create opportunities to protect routes that would otherwise be swapped for more profitable long-haul services; and

- lowering airport visit costs may increase the number of domestic routes that airlines can operate profitably.

Among the report's policy recommendations are that government should:

- Establish explicit domestic transport connectivity objectives;

- assess the impacts of potential intervention in the aviation market;

- monitor and periodically evaluate the effectiveness of support for domestic air connectivity;

- make the award of subsidies transparent;

- keep support programmes simple;

- provide incentives to create value-for-money; and

- weigh the benefits of safeguarding slots at congested airports against the costs of denying them to more profitable services.

■ The **House of Commons public accounts committee** is holding an [inquiry](#) into rail franchising, Crossrail and the government's handling of other rail projects in the UK. As part of the inquiry, the committee will question representatives from the *Department for Transport* and Network Rail about rail franchises in the UK, current issues of timetabling, and the sale of Network Rail's commercial estate.

The committee's previous [report](#) on rail franchising raised concerns about Thameslink, Southern, and Great Northern franchises saying it had "caused misery for passengers." On 20 May 2018, national timetable changes were introduced affecting 46 per cent of train times across the rail network. The changes related to the Thameslink programme aimed to offer "greater reliability and more services to passengers." There were also changes related to the North West electrification programme which was bringing into use enhanced track, signalling and trains. These changes led to significant disruption lasting for many weeks across the South East and North of England.

In November 2018, reports emerged that Crossrail will announce that it needs additional funding, having already received £650m in recent months. Meg Hillier MP, chair of the public accounts committee, has [asked the NAO](#) to conduct an investigation into the Crossrail project, its governance, and delays in its delivery. [The NAO's report](#) is scheduled for early 2019.

■ The **PAC** also published a report on the [defence equipment plan 2018–28](#) having previously reported in May 2018 that the Ministry of Defence "did not have enough money to buy and support the equipment it needs." The failure of the Department to address this had led to an affordability gap between its budget and its forecast costs of £7bn across its plan over the next 10 years. The PAC remains sceptical that the MoD is close to reconciling what it says it needs with the funding it has available.

- The **House of Commons transport select committee** published its report into what went wrong during the May 2018 timetable changes. The report highlights that the May 2018 timetable changes represented a "collective, system-wide failure, across the publicly-owned infrastructure owner and manager, Network Rail, privately-owned train operating companies, Arriva Rail North and GTR, the Department for Transport and the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) itself". It states that the governance and decision-making structures were fundamentally flawed, and that Chris Grayling is responsible "for putting in place suitable governance and decision-making structures for the rail industry." A key lesson of the timetabling crisis is that an independent system operator needs to take charge.

  Some of the key recommendations from the report include:

  □ **Contingencies to assist disabled passengers**
  Putting in place adequate contingency plans to assist disabled people if timetable changes do not go to plan must be a central part of train operating companies' timetable planning process. The ORR must take a proactive approach to ensuring such plans are in place and, in response to this report, it should set out how it intends to do so. The ORR must implement the outcome of its DPPP consultation and stepping up its enforcement activity, including using its powers to levy fines on train operating companies.

  □ **2019 Fares**
  A freeze of regulated fares in 2019 for Thameslink, Great Northern, and TransPennine Express passengers. The TSC argued that passengers do not deserve their fares to increase in line with July's RPI measure of inflation of 3.2 per cent. 2018 Northern, TransPennine Express, Thameslink, and Great Northern season ticket holders must receive a discount.

  □ **Fairer compensation schemes**
  The government must now set a measurable target for implementation of 'one click' automated compensation schemes on commuter rail routes. These schemes must be written into contracts as they are re-let. TSC recommends that smart automated compensation schemes are piloted on GTR, Northern, and TransPennine Express commuter routes by the end of 2019.

  □ **Meaningful consultation and proper impact assessment**
  The Department for Transport's rail franchising team must more actively ensure that all passenger rail franchisees adopt best practice and innovate approaches and adhere to their contractual obligations to consult on all significant service changes.

- **Lilian Greenwood, MP for Nottingham South**, led a Westminster Hall debate on the transport committee's report on rail infrastructure investment which had highlighted regional disparities in rail infrastructure investment and questioned DfT's rail electrification cancellations. The report also called for the government to do more to support the development of new technologies on the rail network. A transcript of the Westminster Hall debate is accessible here.

- The **House of Commons business, energy and industrial strategy committee** published its report on small business and productivity.

- The **UK Space Agency** (an executive agency of the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy) published its corporate plan 2019.

- **Transport for London (TfL)** released over 100 documents relating to Crossrail – including board minutes dating back to 2013 – following the agreement of a funding and financial deal with the government and the Greater London Authority.

  The documents show that the mayor and TfL were forced to commission an independent report to learn the true scale of delays and costs overruns on the project. The documents also show that at a meeting with the mayor and senior TfL executives on 26 July, Crossrail briefed that the official opening date for the project, 9 December 2018 was at "high risk".

- The **Government Office for Science** published a report entitled A time of unprecedented change in the transport system. Launched by government chief scientific adviser Sir Patrick Vallance, the report looks ahead to 2040, identifying the opportunities offered by transport technologies and innovation which will benefit the economy. Among the key headlines are that:

  □ using and sharing data securely and in ways that benefit both companies and public authorities is key. Transport for London's shared data generates around £130m per year for the economy;

  □ closer to real-time understanding of systems is possible, improving understanding of trends and making it easier to design more integrated systems, spot disruptive trends sooner, and improving decision-making;

  □ the movement of goods continues to be critical to our economy: Two billion tonnes of goods were moved in the UK in 2016, 89 per cent by road. There are opportunities out to 2040 for technology in freight. A growing population and demand for quicker deliveries in narrower windows, puts pressure on urban freight deliveries;

  □ hard and soft measures are likely to be key to achieving change, linked with clear goals. This means that the potential of technologies such as self-driving vehicles (be those buses, droids, cars or trains) to support wider objectives can be realised. In Stockholm, through a combination of investing in separate cycling lanes and campaigns, the proportion of cycling trips increased from five to nine per cent between 2004 and 2015;

  □ one size fits none. The right solution is needed for each place. Urban, sub-urban and rural areas all require different responses;

  □ There has been profound social change over the last 20 years. For example, commuting trips are down 20 per cent/person, shopping trips are down 20 per cent/person;

  □ The nature of work, retail, and leisure are changing. People's and businesses responses to this are shaping new travel patterns and behaviours; and

  □ Behavioural and social science can help us better design our built environment and its transport system around users and allow technology to improve the lives of individuals and society. For example, mostly for societal reasons, the percentage of young people with driving licences fell between 1992 and 2014 from 48 per cent to 29 per cent among 17–20-year olds.

- The **Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs** and the **Environment Agency** launched its Resources and Waste Strategy – "the first comprehensive update in more than a decade" – under which Businesses and manufacturers "will pay the full cost of recycling or disposing of their packaging waste."

  The strategy will overhaul England's waste system, "putting a legal onus on those responsible for producing damaging waste to take greater responsibility and foot the bill."

- The **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs** published its report on the clean air strategy 2019.

- The **House of Commons environmental audit committee** published its report on the UK's progress on implementing UN sustainable development goal two entitled Sustainable development goals in the UK follow up: Hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity in the UK

- The **NHS** published its long term plan looking ahead to the Health Service's 80th birthday.

Reports and publications – professional bodies/think-tanks/other:

- **Demos** published its paper on technology Winter is coming – HealthTech is here on opportunities and barriers in using healthcare technology to ease the burden on our NHS and prevent future crises. The paper covers: rapid diagnostics, genetically-tailored medicine, AI-assisted analysis, and new models of remote or self-administered care.

- **Shelter** published its report Building for our future: A vision for social housing.

- The **Institute for Government (IfG)** published a report Government procurement: The scale and nature of contracting in the UK which finds that government spends £284bn – almost one-third of its total expenditure – with external suppliers. Given its scale, government procurement could not easily be abandoned even if politicians wanted. The report also says that four departments spent more than half of their entire budgets with external suppliers last year and also finds that the largest suppliers are winning more and more government business.

- The **IfG** also published a report on staff turnover in the civil service.

- The **National Audit Office (NAO)** published a report on the BBC's E20 programme to enlarge the EastEnders set and related infrastructure at BBC Elstree Centre.

- The **NAO** also published a report Environmental metrics: Government's approach to monitoring the state of the natural environment as an update the NAO's 2015 briefing. The study evaluates how far the government has an effective system for measuring progress towards its environmental objectives.

- Additionally, the **NAO** published its annual report on the financial sustainability of the health service.

- Finally, the **NAO** published a report on decommissioning of the UK's offshore oil and gas infrastructure.

- The **Nuclear Decommissioning Authority** opened a consultation seeking views from the public, nuclear regulators, employees within our subsidiaries and Site Licence Companies, trade unions, local authorities, site stakeholder groups, non-governmental organisations, other organisations and public bodies on the business plan. The consultation opened on 3 December 2018 and closed 4 February 2019.

- The **Joseph Rowntree Foundation** published its report UK poverty 2018: A comprehensive analysis of poverty trends and figures expressing the urgency of taking action "to halt the rise in poverty among workers and their families as well as among children in workless families." The report also asserts that unlocking access to better-paid work, enabling more families to live in low-cost rented homes and strengthening support through the social security system are all strategies which have been shown to reduce poverty.

- The **National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)** published research on trends in Britain's biggest charities.

- The **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman** published its report on the way councils provide services. The ombudsman's report finds four common themes for councils to look out for, where ineffective planning for change can lead to service failure for local people:

  □ accommodating longer backlogs;

  □ reviewing eligibility criteria;

  □ using new partnerships and delivery arrangements; and

  □ restructuring and redesigning services.

- The **Institute of Public Policy Research** published its report State of the North 2018: Reprioritising the Northern Powerhouse. The report is IPPR North's fifth annual State of the North report and sets out five priorities for northern leaders to take this important agenda into a new phase:

  □ commit to a 'whole North' approach;

  □ support job creation and productivity in high-growth and large-employment sectors of the economy;

  □ invest in both infrastructure and people;

  □ deliver economic justice; and

  □ lead from the North.

- The **Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI)** published its report Homeward bound: Defining, understanding and aiding 'commuter students'.

- The **Royal Academy of Engineering** published a collaborative report on engineering skills for the future.

- The **Association of Colleges (AoC)** published a report on *Developing a four nations college blueprint for a post-Brexit economy* arguing that the UK's success post-Brexit "relies on a new social contract and the delivery of a world-class technical and professional education system." The report also argues for "a new social partnership" between colleges, employers, unions and government "to promote skills and engage employers, people and communities in the behaviour and cultural changes required to become a lifelong learning society." Key recommendations include:

  - *a lifetime learning entitlement* – A legal entitlement to accredited education and training, linked to labour market needs. Individuals would be able to access cash, allowing them to engage with education and training at the right time for them. This would be funded by ringfencing part of the adult education budget;

  - *a national retraining programme* – The programme would form a relatively short-term investment to improve productivity, fill significant emerging skills gaps in priority areas. This would also be funded through a ringfence of the adult education budget; and

  - *a better jobs deal* – As recommended by the Resolution Foundation's intergenerational commission, an active labour market programme offering practical support for younger workers in low-skilled and insecure employment to train to progress into better jobs.

- **Policy Exchange** published its report *Powering the Midlands Engine: How to build a local industrial strategy*.

- The **Financial Reporting Council** published its report *The Wates corporate governance principles for large private companies*.

- The **Confederation of British Industry (CBI)** published its report *Ready, set, connect* setting out the latest evidence on the digital infrastructure landscape in the UK and the transformational opportunities of seamless digital connectivity for business. The report, published in December also makes specific recommendations for government to improve the rollout of current and future digital connectivity and outline a roadmap for government action over the next three years, examining how government can "create the conditions for business adoption of digital connectivity, providing insight for firms on how to practically improve their digital tools."

- The **home secretary Sajid Javid** published the government's *white paper* on the UK's future skills-based immigration system.

- **Migration Watch UK** published a *white paper* on immigration after Brexit.

- The **Resolution Foundation** published its *report* on how employment has changed in the UK considering the following questions:

  - Has the massive expansion in the amount of work come at the expense of job quality?

  - Has the jobs surge ameliorated or exacerbated geographic divisions?

  - Which occupations and industries have grown, and which have declined?

  - Has record employment improved prospects for people settled in the UK, or has it predominantly offered opportunities to people willing to move to the UK from abroad?

- The **CBI** published the first in a series of reports in 2019 on the apprenticeship and skills system. *Getting apprenticeships right: Next steps* recommends that the government gives the **Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA)** the independence and clout it needs to reform and regulate the English skills system. It calls for a new wave of government action to ensure apprenticeships lead to high-skilled, high-paid jobs, that fit firms' needs now and in the future. The report's key recommendations include:

  - the government must make clear that the Institute is the principal body for vocational skills in England with the clout to hold policymakers and the skills sector to account;

  - the Institute must take further steps to speed up the apprenticeship standards approval process so that businesses can start using them;

  - given employer levy funds are due to start expiring from April 2019, the government must urgently set up an appeals system that gives employers longer to spend their money where apprenticeship standards remain in development; and

  - with the IfA assuming responsibility for T-levels and higher T-levels, they must set out how these routes will work in practice to give employers and the public confidence in them.

APM head of external affairs, David Thomson said "*We welcome the CBI's report … which sets out proposals for improving apprenticeships, including greater transparency for the funding process. Our experience in supporting an employers group for a popular project management apprenticeship certainly lends weight to the CBI's recommendation: that full transparency must be provided over funding decisions to help underpin support for the process to enable organisations to be confident in committing their organisation to the apprenticeship programme. Popular, quality apprenticeships that are successful with employers – both public and private sector – and are appropriately funded, should inspire confidence in the system.*

"It is vital that there is a stable and consistent funding regime for apprenticeships that allow employers and other organisations to plan for the long-term. The CBI's recommendations, both for government and for the Institute for Apprenticeships, are helpful and emphasise the importance of measured and transparent funding decisions in maintaining quality apprenticeships."

Notable appointments:

- The **Civil Aviation Authority (CAA)** appointed Rachel Gardner-Poole as the new head of its general aviation unit. She will replace Tony Rapson, who will depart later in the year. Ms Gardner-Poole is currently the portfolio director at the CAA and has previously worked in the Home Office and as a scientific researcher in the defence sector.

- Gareth Davies has been officially put forward by the prime minister and the chair of the **public accounts committee (PAC)** as the next **comptroller and auditor general (C&AG)** of the **National Audit Office (NAO)***. The new C&AG will take up post from 1 June 2019, at which point he will also become chief executive of the NAO. The appointment is subject to the House of Commons agreeing to recommend the candidate to HM Queen.

  - The **PAC** published a report informed by its pre-appointment hearing with the preferred candidate for C&AG.

  - The government confirmed Gareth Davies as the preferred candidate for the role on 7 January and the committee held a hearing with Mr Davies on 16 January.

  - The committee is satisfied that Mr Davies has the professional competence and personal independence required to head up the National Audit Office.

  - The next formal step is for the prime minister to table a motion in the House asking the Queen to appoint Mr Davies. Sir Amyas Morse will lead the NAO until the end of his 10-year term of May 31 2019.

Reports, publications, and activity from the world of project management: December 2018 and January 2019:

- **Call for Papers** for IPMA´s 31st world congress 2019. The conference will run from 30 September–2 October in Merida, Mexico. More information can be found here.

- The **Trust in Major and Mega Projects – 7th IPMA research conference** has been announced and will take place from 4– 7 September 2019 in Zagreb, Croatia.

- The **IPMA research awards 2019** are open for submissions – click here for details.

- A blog reflection and papers for the **IPMA research conference 2018** are now available here.

- A two-day seminar for research and education in project management, **REPM2019** will be held in Bilbao, Spain with the collaboration of AEIPRO and IPMA from 21– 22 February – click here for more information.

- The **Major Projects Association** has launched its events programme for 2019. Click here for more information.

APM events/research and policy outputs:

- An **APM chartered celebration event** for the first chartered cohort was held in London on the 30 January 2019.

- Over 80 delegates attended **APM's North West research symposium** on the 4 December 2018. This two-part research extravaganza consisted of a doctoral workshop and a research symposium in the evening and was held with the University of Manchester and the APM North West branch. The next event will be held by Lancaster University.

- Eight new **APM research summaries** were published in this period across a range of topics including project management in the creative industries, social procurement in construction projects, benefits management, and local community stakeholders in megaprojects.

APM forthcoming:

- For more details on **APM's forthcoming events and conferences** including the APM project management conference in Edinburgh in March – click here

- **Project management for large complex projects:** an expert report by Professor Andrew Davies (UCL) will be published on the 21 February.

- **APM research fund 2019 call for funding now open** for submissions running until 25 February 2019. The APM research fund has been established within the research programme to provide funding for small-scale research projects or to provide seed funding for larger research projects. APM's research themes and priorities for 2019 are: *Digitalisation, artificial intelligence and big data in projects* and *International ethics: projects across boundaries* – this study is also open to non-UK residents. Other themes will also be considered for funding. Click here for eligibility, guidance and further information.

- **APM's wellbeing research**. This study funded by the APM research fund aims to provide a new lens to improve project performance and help to drive productivity. To make workplace wellbeing truly a core business priority in our profession, why not help shape the research by taking part in the survey (by 15 February).