



THE CHARTERED BODY FOR THE PROJECT PROFESSION



# APM Major Project Leadership Specialist Certificate Case Studies



**Tom Frost**

**ChPP, MAPM, RPP**  
Project Director Phase2  
LNG Canada, Shell

**What has the impact been on your career since achieving the APM Major Project Leadership Specialist Certificate?**

It was an opportunity for me to self-reflect on my leadership competences – both where I have strengths and where I have gaps. All opportunities to self-reflect are positive and can enhance my career through identification and closing of gaps.

**Why did you want to take the APM Major Project Leadership Specialist Certificate?**

I wanted to take some time away from the hectic job of running my project and self-reflect and to gain recognition of my leadership competences which are crucial to deliver in my current role. I was also very keen to help APM with the pilot and to give back to the profession as a whole.

**How do you anticipate having this certificate will benefit you?**

It brings an additional level of credibility to have an APM verification of my project leadership competences.

**In your opinion, why is it important for the profession to have a certificate for delivery and leadership of major projects?**

As project complexity tends to grow with size and challenging operating environments it is essential that the project leaders of major projects have strong project leadership competences to navigate that complexity and enable successful project delivery. The certificate can help identify gaps to close for individuals to reach the right level of competence. Personally I passed through a 'project leadership transition' in 2013 by learning the hard way. In a new role I focussed too much on the technical aspects of the role and not enough on the leadership dimensions. Fortunately I was

able to redress the balance once I realised I was off-track and since then I have focussed very much on both my own project leadership competences and those of the senior project professionals around me.

**How did you find the process overall?**

Engaging and insightful. I also found the balance of effort / reward about right. I still have so much to learn about myself!

**Would you recommend this to others? If so, why?**

Yes, if you have experience of working in a major project leadership position and are seeking a prompt to self-reflect on your own project leadership competencies. I would recommend to people who have some experience of working on major projects already.



## Andrew Wain

Global Program Management  
Strategy Director, AECOM

### **Why did you want to take the APM Major Project Leadership Specialist Certificate?**

The certificate will legitimise my experience which has been developed in delivering 'non-standard' projects.

### **How do you anticipate having this certificate will benefit you?**

The legitimacy gained through gaining this from such an esteemed organisation as APM will build trust in my capability to deliver successfully. This in turn will enable me to participate in initiatives to develop the practice.

### **In your opinion, why is it important for the profession to have a certificate for delivery and leadership of major projects?**

The strategic approach and leadership required to be successful in the major projects space are distinct additions to the suite of capabilities required for the delivery of most projects. Our practice is experiencing a shift towards the 'softer' requirements of project leadership such as legacy and stakeholder engagement which are fundamental to achieving success. A standard which reflects this is important.

### **How did you find the process overall?**

The process was simple and straightforward. Thanks to the support of the certificate coordinators, I was very clear on my requirements throughout.

### **Would you recommend this to others? If so, why?**

Yes. The legitimacy gained from an APM certificate is a valuable addition to the CV. I would particularly recommend this to individuals involved in the megaproject and programme

space and to those who question 'why?' they are delivering the projects they are delivering. Further, this certificate is very applicable to project professionals who are leading large-scale business change.



**Páraic McLoughney**  
**ChPP, FAPM**

Deputy Project Manager,  
BP

**Why did you want to take the APM Major Project Leadership Specialist Certificate?**

I wanted to test how my competences in major projects measure up against a benchmark of what good would look like from the perspective of an external professional body.

**How do you anticipate having this certificate will benefit you?**

I think it enables me to confidently pursue increasing levels of responsibility in leading major projects.

**In your opinion, why is it important for the profession to have a certificate for delivery and leadership of major projects?**

Major projects involve significantly greater levels of complexity compared to smaller projects, with much lower probability of success. Understanding how and why this is the case is vitally important to improving our profession's ability to deliver these exciting projects.

**How did you find the process overall?**

The process was well structured and clear, with similarities to the chartership process. I particularly enjoyed the interview, which felt very much like a conversation between peers about some of the real challenges associated with the delivering major projects.

**Would you recommend this to others? If so, why?**

Yes. It allows you to test your competences and capabilities against a standardised framework, giving you a great sense of your readiness to contribute at a high level in major project delivery. I would recommend it to people who are looking to progress within their major project organisation.



## Andrew Goodman ChPP, MAPM

Workplace Transformation Director,  
Department for Work and Pensions

### **Why did you want to take the APM Major Project Leadership Specialist Certificate?**

As an experienced project delivery professional I believe it is important to achieve universally recognised accreditation. As a volunteer for the pilot I felt it was important that senior members of Government's Project Delivery Profession help shape and develop these important endorsements of the leadership of major projects.

### **How do you anticipate having this certificate will benefit you?**

This endorsement of my project delivery leadership compliments the professional journey I have been on for a number of years including participation in the Infrastructure & Projects Authority Major Projects Leadership Academy and more recently becoming a Chartered Project Professional. Professional development is key to a continued professional career and the certificate will help maintain that.

### **In your opinion, why is it important for the profession to have a certificate for delivery and leadership of major projects?**

The delivery of major projects requires experience, knowledge and leadership, having a certificate that recognises that but is also a benchmarked professional standard helps to maintain transferable skills between projects and ultimately will further professionalise the delivery of major projects.

### **How did you find the process overall?**

The process was straight forward and logical, but you do have to reflect on the skills you have and be able to demonstrate them succinctly in the written evidence you provide. The interview however gives you the opportunity to expand on

your evidence and allow your knowledge to be explored more fully.

### **Would you recommend this to others? If so, why?**

Yes. It provides certification in a specialized area of project delivery. To be able to complete the certificate you need to have experience of working on major projects, using the certificate to help develop the skills needed to take on more demanding roles in major project leadership would be a good path way, however as this is a new certificate experienced project leaders should also consider completing the certificate to continue the professionalisation of project delivery.



**Elliot Young**  
Sub Lot Director,  
HS2

### **Why did you want to take the APM Major Project Leadership Specialist Certificate?**

As the size and scale of projects increase, so does the complexity of strategy and project execution. The APM Major Project Leadership Specialist Certificate provides demonstrable evidence of your experience and mastery in this field of excellence providing a sense of achievement and accomplishment through the recognition of your peers.

### **How do you anticipate having this certificate will benefit you?**

The APM Major Project Leadership Certificate demonstrates professional competence and your ability to navigate through the complexities and ambiguities of major projects. The APM credential is highly regarded and provides a level of status recognised throughout the industry and public/private sector.

### **In your opinion, why is it important for the profession to have a certificate for delivery and leadership of major projects?**

As projects become more complex and multi-faceted, a project director must be able to understand, appreciate and manage the ambiguity that exists. Processes alone will not manage the complexity and risk across the breadth of the phases of a project. A project and the team require a leader.

Delivering major projects now not only requires a combination of technical skills and experience, but the ability to lead, setting the tone, the pace and standard, this requires a particular set of skills to influence organisational and delivery aspects of, capability, mindset, attitude, and behaviour. These characteristics bring unique complexities associated with major projects: multiple complex interfaces with government bodies, partners and clients, stakeholders such as key local communities and statutory authorities.

The industry needs a common platform to assess and structure capability and as leaders, it is incumbent upon us to ensure we provide the foundation with which we can provide that direction. Delivering major projects now is so much more than systems and process. These will facilitate delivery, but they will not principally ensure success. The performance of large capital projects has been poor with many major projects overrunning. I believe understanding the wider context in which the project is to be delivered is paramount, moreover being able to recognise the issues early and adapt. It is often moreover about being able to anticipate the issues and complexity and setting the team up to respond and deliver accordingly.

### **How did you find the process overall?**

I found the process challenging but extremely rewarding. Reflecting upon the, what was achieved and how can it be articulated in the assessment criteria in the context of leadership was extremely thought provoking. It was certainly a stern test and the concluding interview was a satisfying exchange.

### **Would you recommend this to others? If so, why?**





Yes, principally because I do not believe our project managers/directors are trained adequately. As an industry, we do not have the processes in place to develop the 'soft' skills that they need to manage major projects, particularly in the context of complexity and the multi-faceted nature of the direction these projects are now being delivered. We rely overly on experience and knowledge to the degree that we have a void developing within the industry.



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