



MARKET ANALYSIS

Are We Running Short of Project Managers? 2025 Market Analysis

56% of UK businesses say they can't find the project managers they need in 2025 — and the shortage is about to get a lot more expensive.

Project management is going through a period of huge demand, and that demand is only going to grow. Major projects are landing on the horizon and companies across the UK are transitioning towards an AI world — which means there's a shortage of skills on the market. If you need to hire these people, you have to move quickly with the right offer. This report shows you where the shortages are, what they're costing, and what to do about them.

THE SUMMARY

OK, What's Going On?

56% of UK businesses can't find the project managers they need in 2025. Our research shows clear regional differences in where that bites hardest: London and the South East have more candidates but fierce competition for them, while the East Midlands, Northern Ireland and Wales face serious shortages despite lower demand overall. Major projects — the £10bn+ Universal Studios development in Bedford and the government's £22bn green energy push chief among them — are going to make these shortages worse before they get better. This report examines how acute the shortage is by region, what project managers are actually paid across the UK, where demand is heading through 2030, which regions and industries face the biggest hiring challenges, and the practical steps hiring managers can take.

56%

of hiring managers say they're struggling to find project managers who fit the bill

30%

salary premium construction PMs can command as their roles fall into higher demand

£750

day rate for cybersecurity project management professionals, one of the most in-demand roles

£22bn

the government is investing in clean energy projects, driving up demand for PMs

THE SHORTAGE

We Need More PMs Than We Can Find

According to the Association for Project Management (APM), 56% of UK businesses expect trouble finding project management talent in 2025. That demand is coming from more complex projects requiring specialised expertise, digital transformation rolling out across every industry, experienced project managers retiring out of the workforce, and a growing recognition of project management as an essential discipline rather than a nice-to-have.

56%

of UK businesses expect trouble finding project management talent in 2025, according to the Association for Project Management.

56% Expect trouble hiring PMs

44% Everyone else

More complex, specialised projects

Digital transformation everywhere

Experienced PMs retiring

PM seen as essential, not nice-to-have

The economic impact is already substantial. The UK construction sector faces critical labour shortages that threaten to delay major infrastructure projects and drive up costs — Turner & Townsend's UK Market Intelligence report (Spring 2025) describes the sector as being at a "crossroads", with labour shortages and rising wages creating serious challenges.

BY REGION

The Regional Picture

- Scotland — shortages concentrated in oil, gas and renewable energy; Edinburgh and Glasgow's tech sectors add extra demand; average salaries £43,000–£50,000, competitive

thanks to strong government investment in green energy.

- Northern England — serious shortages as manufacturing and data centre projects ramp up; growing tech hubs in Manchester and Leeds add demand; average salaries £42,000–£48,000, lower than London but rising, and particularly affected by the Universal Studios development and its associated infrastructure.
- Northern Ireland and Wales — significant talent shortages with longer time-to-fill periods; average salaries £38,000–£42,000; growing demand from renewable energy projects; remote work arrangements offer a way to reach a wider talent pool.
- East Midlands — a "hotspot" for talent shortages despite only moderate demand, creating opportunities for recruitment specialists; average salaries around £45,000; proximity to the Bedford Universal Studios development will increase the pressure further.
- London and the South East — average salaries £45,616–£54,030, with specialised finance/technology roles advertised at £70,000–£100,000; facing shortages specifically in digital transformation and sustainability roles.

SALARIED PAY

Regional Average Salaries

The national average sits at £46,688, with entry-level roles averaging £37,376.

Average PM salary by city

Average project manager salary in seven UK cities



National average: £46,688. Source: Example Recruitment research

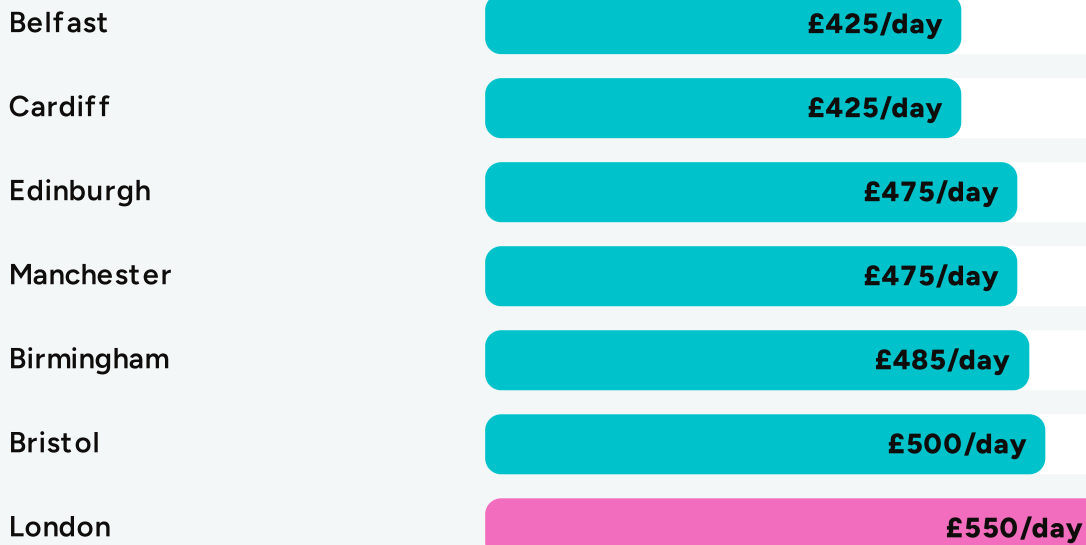
CONTRACTOR PAY

Regional Average Contractor Day Rates

The national average day rate is £518. As with salaries, London sits well above every other city — but the gap is narrower than the salary figures suggest.

Average PM contractor day rate by city

Average project manager day rate in seven UK cities



National average: £518 a day. Source: Example Recruitment research

SALARIED PAY

UK PM Salaries by Experience

- Entry-Level (0–3 years) — UK average £37,376–£42,000, London premium +15–20%. Common titles: Project Coordinator, Assistant Project Manager, Junior Project Manager. Pay is driven by educational background, technical skills and certifications.
- Mid-Level (3–7 years) — UK average £46,688–£55,000, London premium +15–25%. Common titles: Project Manager, IT Project Manager, Construction Project Manager. Pay is driven by track record, industry expertise and leadership skills.
- Senior (8+ years) — UK average £60,000–£75,000, London premium +20–30%. Common titles: Senior Project Manager, Programme Manager, Project Director. Pay is driven by strategic thinking, complex project experience and stakeholder management.
- Executive (Director/VP of Project Management) — UK average £85,000–£120,000+, London premium +25–40%. Common titles: Director of Project Management, VP of Programme Management, Chief Project Officer. Pay is driven by organisational impact, portfolio management experience and executive leadership.

UK PM Day Rates by Experience

- Junior (1–3 years) — £350–£450/day. Supporting senior PMs, managing smaller projects, documentation. Typically inside IR35, often via umbrella companies.
- Mid-level (3–7 years) — £450–£550/day. Managing medium-sized projects, stakeholder management. A mix of inside and outside IR35.
- Senior (7–10 years) — £550–£650/day. Complex project delivery, multiple workstream coordination. Preference for outside IR35 where possible.
- Programme Managers/Senior Specialists (10+ years) — £650–£800+/day. Programme oversight, strategic direction, multiple project coordination. Often outside IR35 or via limited company.

PREMIUMS

Industry & Specialist Premiums — Salaried

- Technology — 15–25% above UK average. Highest demand for AI, cybersecurity and cloud migration specialisation. Senior IT PMs specialising in cybersecurity: £70,000–£85,000 outside London, £85,000–£100,000+ in London.
- Financial Services — 10–20% above UK average. Highest demand for regulatory compliance, digital banking and fintech integration. PMs with regulatory expertise: £60,000–£75,000 outside London, £75,000–£90,000 in London.
- Construction and Infrastructure — premium varies by project scale, 5–30% above average for large-scale projects. Highest demand for sustainable building, infrastructure megaprojects and smart city initiatives. Large infrastructure PMs: £55,000–£70,000 outside London, £70,000–£85,000 in London.
- Energy (particularly Renewables) — 10–20% above UK average. Highest demand for wind farm development, solar implementation and energy storage. Renewable energy PMs: £50,000–£65,000 outside London, £65,000–£80,000 in London.

PREMIUMS

Industry & Specialist Premiums — Contractor

- Technology — £550–£800/day. AI implementation commands £650–£800, cloud migration £600–£750, cybersecurity £650–£750; standard IT project management sits at £550–£650. Highest demand and fastest-growing rates, particularly for AI expertise.
- Financial Services — £525–£750/day. Investment banking £600–£750, fintech £575–£700, insurance and retail banking £525–£650. Strong demand for regulatory compliance expertise and digital transformation.
- Construction and Infrastructure — £450–£650/day. Major infrastructure projects £550–£650, commercial construction £500–£600, residential development £450–£550. The Universal Studios development is creating localised rate increases.
- Energy and Utilities — £500–£700/day. Renewable energy projects £550–£700, smart grid implementation £550–£650, traditional energy and water utilities £500–£600. Government green energy investment is driving demand and rates.

PREMIUMS

The Impact of Certifications

- Security clearance — SC cleared: +10–15% (£570–£595 average). DV cleared: +20–30% (£620–£675 average). Highest impact in government, defence and financial services.
- Methodology certification — Agile/Scrum certified: +5–15% (£545–£595). PRINCE2 Practitioner: +5–10% (£545–£570). PMP certified: +10–15% (£570–£595). Highest impact in technology and financial services.
- Industry-specific certification — Construction (CIOB, RICS): +5–15% in construction. Financial (FCA-regulated experience): +10–20% in financial services. IT (ITIL, cloud certifications): +10–20% in technology. Highest impact in specialised project roles within their respective industries.

Market Trends in 2025

- **Specialised Skills Premium** — the gap between general project management and specialised roles keeps widening, with AI, cloud and sustainability expertise commanding the highest premiums. AI implementation specialists are earning 20–30% more than general IT project managers.
- **Regional Equalisation** — London still commands the highest rates, but the gap is narrowing as remote work lets contractors access London-level rates from regional locations. Some regional rates are growing faster than London's, driven by specific local project demand.
- **IR35 Impact** — inside-IR35 roles typically command 10–15% higher day rates than equivalent outside-IR35 positions, compensating for tax implications and reduced flexibility. The public sector is particularly affected by standardised inside-IR35 approaches.
- **Major Project Influence** — the Universal Studios development in Bedford is creating localised rate increases; government green energy initiatives are driving premium rates for renewable expertise; HS2's continuation is maintaining demand for infrastructure PMs. Longer contracts (6+ months) typically offer 5–10% lower day rates in exchange for stability.

DEMAND DRIVERS

The Influence of Major Projects

Two projects stand out as the biggest drivers of demand. The Universal Studios development in Bedford is a multi-billion-pound investment — estimated at £10bn+ — with construction beginning soon and completion expected by 2031. It's set to create around 20,000 jobs during construction and roughly 28,000 overall, and will draw project management talent from across the UK, particularly affecting the East of England, East Midlands and London. It needs construction project management, infrastructure development, entertainment venue operations and supply chain management specifically. The project itself is a 476-acre complex with potential expansion to 700 acres, comprising a theme park, a 500-room hotel and a retail complex — estimated to attract 8.5 million visitors in its first year and generate £50 billion for the UK economy by 2055.

28,000

jobs, roughly, from the Bedford Universal Studios development — around 20,000 of them during construction alone.

The second is the UK government's green energy investment — nearly £22 billion pledged for clean energy projects, plus £200m specifically into rooftop solar for schools and the NHS. Focus areas include carbon capture and storage, renewable energy development and the North Sea's clean energy future, spanning wind farms, solar implementation, grid infrastructure and energy storage. It's particularly affecting Scotland, North East England and coastal regions, and is creating significant demand for project managers with renewable energy expertise specifically.

NEW SPECIALISMS

Emerging Specialist Roles in High Demand

- **Digital Transformation** — leading organisational change through technology implementation, with change management, technology integration and stakeholder alignment as key skills. 89% of UK companies have adopted or plan to adopt digital-first strategies. Regional hotspots: London, Manchester, Edinburgh, Bristol.
- **Sustainability** — implementing environmental and social governance initiatives, with ESG knowledge, stakeholder engagement and regulatory compliance as key skills. Driven by the UK government's net-zero commitment and the £22bn clean energy investment. Regional hotspots: Scotland (renewable energy), industrial centres (manufacturing transformation).
- **Agile Transformation Leadership** — guiding organisations from traditional to agile methodologies, with agile coaching, organisational change and scaled agile frameworks as key skills. 71% of UK organisations report using agile approaches for some or all projects. Regional hotspots: London, Manchester, Birmingham, Edinburgh.
- **AI Implementation Project Management** — deploying AI and machine learning solutions, with AI/ML understanding, data governance and ethical AI implementation as key skills. 78% of UK employers report concerns about finding qualified talent in IT and technology. Regional hotspots: London, Cambridge, Oxford, Manchester, Edinburgh.

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78%

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BY REGION

Regional Challenges in 2025 and Beyond

- Scotland — specialised shortages in the energy sector; the challenge is finding project managers with renewable energy expertise, driven by the rapid expansion of wind and other renewable projects. Regional hotspot: Aberdeen, transitioning from oil & gas to renewables. Opportunity: retraining oil & gas PMs for renewable projects.
- Northern England — moderate to high shortages; competing with the Universal Studios development and data centre projects, against a backdrop of manufacturing revival and technology hub growth. Regional hotspots: Manchester, Leeds, Newcastle facing the most acute shortages. Opportunity: lower cost of living as a recruitment advantage.
- Wales and Northern Ireland — high shortages with a limited local pipeline; smaller talent pools with fewer specialised professionals, held back by limited local training and development programmes. The recruitment hurdle is attracting talent from other UK regions. Opportunity: remote work arrangements to access wider talent pools.
- East Midlands — high shortages despite only moderate demand; proximity to the Bedford Universal Studios development is creating a talent drain, compounded by a limited local training pipeline. The recruitment hurdle is competing with higher London salaries within commuting distance. Opportunity: developing local talent through apprenticeships and university partnerships.
- London and the South East — high competition despite having the largest talent pool; the unique challenge is the highest cost of living and salary expectations, driven by the concentration of headquarters and major projects there. The recruitment hurdle is standing out among the many employers competing for the same talent. Opportunity: remote/hybrid work models to access talent from other regions.

Winning the Fight for the Best PMs — Immediate Strategies

- Adopt regional salary benchmarking — build compensation packages from current regional data rather than historical benchmarks, using salary survey data to create competitive offers per region. Impact: reduces offer rejections and improves acceptance rates by 15–20%. Example: a Birmingham-based company offering London-competitive salaries for remote roles saw application rates increase by 35%.
- Implement skills-based hiring — shift from experience-based to skills-based candidate evaluation, creating skills matrices that prioritise capabilities over years of experience. Impact: expands the candidate pool by 25–30% and improves diversity. Example: a Manchester technology firm removed degree requirements and focused on demonstrated skills, increasing its qualified candidate pool by 40%.
- Leverage remote/hybrid work models — offer flexible location options to reach talent beyond local geography, with clear remote work policies and effective virtual collaboration tools. Impact: expands the talent pool across all UK regions and improves retention. Example: a London financial services firm offering hybrid work (2 days in office) successfully recruited project managers from Bristol, Birmingham and Manchester.
- Accelerate hiring processes — streamline recruitment workflows to cut time-to-hire, with maximum timeframes for each stage (48-hour feedback, same-week decisions). Impact: reduces candidate loss to competitors by 30–40%. Example: an Edinburgh technology company cut its hiring process from 6 weeks to 2, improving offer acceptance rates from 65% to 82%.
- Partner with specialised recruiters — engage recruiters with deep expertise in project management, selected on demonstrated success in specific PM specialisations. Impact: improves candidate quality and reduces time-to-hire. Example: an energy company working with Example received 3 highly qualified PMs within one week of engaging us on a role that had been open for over two months.

Speed wins offers

An Edinburgh technology company's offer acceptance rate, before and after cutting its hiring process from 6 weeks to 2

6-week process

65%

35%

2-week process

82%

18%

■ Offers accepted ■ Not accepted

6 weeks

hiring process before



2 weeks

hiring process after

Source: Example Recruitment research

WHAT TO DO NEXT

Long-Term Strategies to Win the Long Game

- Develop internal talent pipelines — create structured pathways to build project management capability internally, through formal mentoring, rotation opportunities and clear career progression. Impact: reduces external hiring needs by 20–30% within 18–24 months. Example: a UK financial services organisation built a project management academy, cutting external senior PM hiring by 40% within two years.
- Create apprenticeship programmes — use UK apprenticeship levy funding to develop entry-level project talent, partnering with APM and training providers. Impact: builds a sustainable talent pipeline while putting existing levy contributions to use. Example: a construction firm in Wales built a PM apprenticeship programme that now supplies 25% of its junior project staff.
- Establish university partnerships — collaborate with UK universities on project management talent through internship programmes, sponsored research and guest lecturers. Impact: improves early access to emerging talent and strengthens employer

brand. Example: a technology company partnering with universities in Manchester and Leeds now recruits 30% of its project coordinators directly from these programmes.

- Implement AI-enhanced recruitment — use AI tools to improve candidate identification and screening, deploying AI-powered sourcing and skills assessment platforms. Impact: expands the candidate pool and reduces unconscious bias. Example: a UK healthcare organisation's AI-enhanced recruitment increased diverse candidate identification by 45%.
- Develop specialised training programmes — build targeted upskilling for high-demand specialisations such as sustainability, AI implementation and digital transformation. Impact: addresses specific skill gaps while improving retention. Example: an energy company in Scotland built a renewable project management training programme that successfully transitioned 28 oil & gas project managers into renewable energy projects.

THE TAKEAWAY

The Takeaway: Shortages Now — More to Come Unless We Take Action

Regional variations are getting skewed by remote and hybrid work, which is opening up opportunities in the capital for candidates in the East Midlands, for instance — all set against major developments happening in regions such as Bedfordshire. Those major projects are looming on the horizon, and the green energy revolution is already underway. Access to specialist talent pools is massive here, but so is the ability to upskill PMs into renewables, for example. New specialisations are already in high demand — digital transformation, sustainability, AI implementation and agile transformation — but we have a skills shortage in exactly those areas, and they all command a premium. Plan now and build your pipeline: create pathways for people to develop the skills you need, whether that's partnering with universities, building your own project management academy to find the PMs hidden within your organisation, or working with specialist recruiters. When demand is high, move quickly — those who get offers in fast will win, and those who need three or more interviews with weeks in between will continue to lose out.



We have always known there is a shortage of project managers in the UK, but more importantly, there is a skills shortage for the major projects and the landscape we're moving into. You can act in the short term, but if you really want to plan for the future, and you can foresee the requirement, build an academy, develop partnerships and accelerate your talent pipeline — or you'll lose out.

— GARETH CARTMAN, EXAMPLE



Example Recruitment — marketing-led headhunters for SaaS and FinTech startups and scaleups in New York and London.

Read the live report and get in touch at theexample.co/reports/project-manager-market-analysis-2025