Counting Sheep and Managing Chaos: Project Delivery Lessons from the Great Sheep Census of 2026

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Fictional Project

Introduction

Fictional Project Overview

The Great Sheep Census of 2026 is a fictional initiative using drones and facial recognition to count sheep in the UK.

Project Lifecycle Stages & Supplier Resilience

The project explores key lifecycle stages: concept, planning, execution, and closure for effective delivery as well as our work with suppliers to aid in this delivery.

Project Controls in Government

Although we all know the project lifecycle, this project explores them in a government context and what we navigate to deliver national infrastructure.

Concept & Initiation

Project Initiation Vision

The project begins with a ministerial vision to count every sheep using drones and AI technologies.

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder analysis identifies farmers, tech providers, and symbolic sheep representatives for project involvement.

Commercial considerations

Sustainable supply chain, market appetite and engagement, SME scalability.

Risk Register Preparation

A risk register with potential risks like sheep rebellion and drone confusion helps prepare for challenges.

Business Case Development

A robust business case is developed to justify the project's feasibility and align with strategic goals.

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Planning

Logistics and Resource Allocation

Planning includes procuring drones and developing AI to identify millions of sheep by facial features.

Project Controls and Planning

Comprehensive project plan outlines timelines, milestones, and dependencies vital for effective control.

Budget and Governance Structure

Budget controls manage £12 million funding with contingencies; governance includes diverse expert steering group.

Change Control Process

Change control manages scope creep such as unexpected additions of goats or alpacas to the project.

Procurement Strategy: Competitive tendering for drone and AI suppliers, ensuring compliance with public procurement regulations.

Commercial considerations

Sustainable supply chain, market appetite and engagement, SME scalability. ,

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Delivery & Execution

Drone Deployment and Scanning

Drones are to be deployed across the UK to scan sheep, initiating the project's core activities despite unforeseen challenges.

Project Controls and Monitoring

Reporting data continues focused on issues and delivery into the center of the department.

Political environment may mean close ministerial interest and so up to date data is important to ensure that they are fully informed.

Quality Assurance and Oversight

Gateway 4 is conducted by independent Civil Servants as a readiness check on the project. Help us see the alpaca through the sheep.

Supplier Resilience

Monitoring of joint SLAs to track delivery but ensure we are not pushing a supplier to work at risk.

Clear lines of governance to escalate issues and resolve them quickly.

Contingency plans for underperforming vendors or tech failures (e.g. drones mistaking sheep for rocks).

Closure

Project Completion and Evaluation

Closure phase ends active work and starts evaluation, documenting results and lessons learned from the project.

Final Sheep Count and Success Declaration

Final count of 33,000,001 sheep including an honorary alpaca is published, marking project success announcement.

Post-Implementation Controls

Includes post-implementation review, benefits realization plan, and final risk assessment emphasizing residual risks humorously.

Future Project Initiatives

Proposal for follow-up 'Cow Census via Quantum Blockchain' illustrates forward-thinking and innovation in livestock data.

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Reflections and takeaways

Importance of Structured Delivery and Assurance In Ambiguous Environments

Project controls help manage complexity and ensure accountability in any project,

Adaptability and Stakeholder Engagement

Successful projects require adaptability and active engagement with stakeholders throughout the process.

Continuous Learning and Evaluation

Ongoing monitoring and learning are essential to guide projects through unexpected challenges effectively.

Any questions

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Thank You