

Project Managers

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Project Manager Salaries UK

The locations & industries that matter

All sorts of factors affect salaries. Perfectly well-qualified people often cannot find the role they want, purely because of their location. Also, certain industries pay much higher salaries than others, especially within the project management realm.

Read this article to discover where the highest/lowest paid project managers work and which industries they work in. This research is of particular importance to individuals taking their first steps into the career, as well as those of you who are more established.

Overview

Project managers in the UK are certainly well paid, with an average salary of £40-£50k reported nationwide¹. However, when looking further at reported salaries, it is clear to see that project managers in certain regions, or those working in certain industries, are earning well above the national average.

As you might expect, London is where these higher earners are located, with project managers earning well over £60k², but Scotland also stands out as a location where project managers earn far above the UK average, earning over £68k³.

With regards to industry worked in, it is perhaps unsurprising that the wealthy legal, IT and banking industries report higher than average salaries, earning between £57-65k⁴, and project crazy sectors such as transport, public services and aerospace all earn a nice average of £57,500⁵.

However, some sectors actually pay below the UK national average. You may not be surprised, but project managers working in the customer services and administration/secretarial sectors earn very little compared to others, averaging as low as £23k⁶ for those in admin and £29k⁷ for customer services.

Perhaps more surprisingly is that project managers working in the marketing/advertising/PR industry, usually a glitzy and well-paid industry, earn just £28,890⁸ at the lower end of the scale, and £32,500⁹ at the higher end.

Location, location, location

London

As noted in the previous chapter, London is home to some of the highest earning project managers in the UK, where they earn £10k more than the £40-£50k national average.

London may be an obvious place for high earners to live and work, whatever the job role, but delving deeper to try and understand why project managers in particular earn more in the capital than elsewhere is quite interesting.

If we look at what is happening in London at the moment, the need for project managers is incredibly high, with projects springing up across the city. Old buildings are being demolished, entire boroughs are

undergoing regeneration, and let's not forget famous projects such as Crossrail and Battersea Power Station.

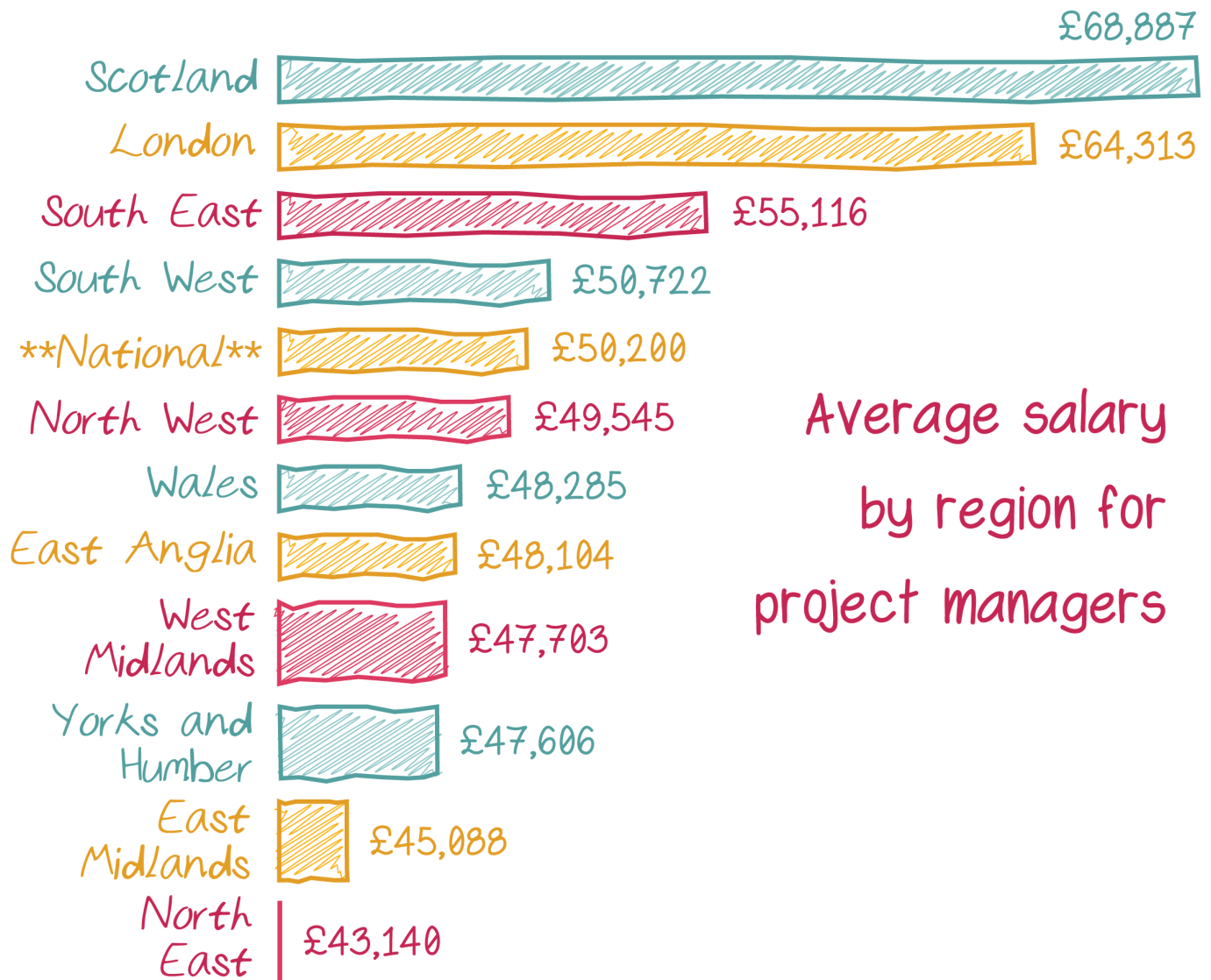
With so much engineering and construction happening in the capital, it is safe to say that London-based project managers working in these industries are earning big money.

In fact, London-based project managers in the engineering industry earn on average over £51k¹⁰, which is certainly above average for project managers in any industry. Compare this with engineering project managers in Birmingham, who earn £40k¹¹, and those in Manchester earning £41k¹², and it is quite clear that location really matters when it comes to salaries in project management.

If we also look at the other high-earning industries, such as the legal and banking sectors noted in the previous chapter, it is interesting to note that London is actually the UK's major base for these two industries^{13 14}, and so higher salaries are to be expected.

Scotland

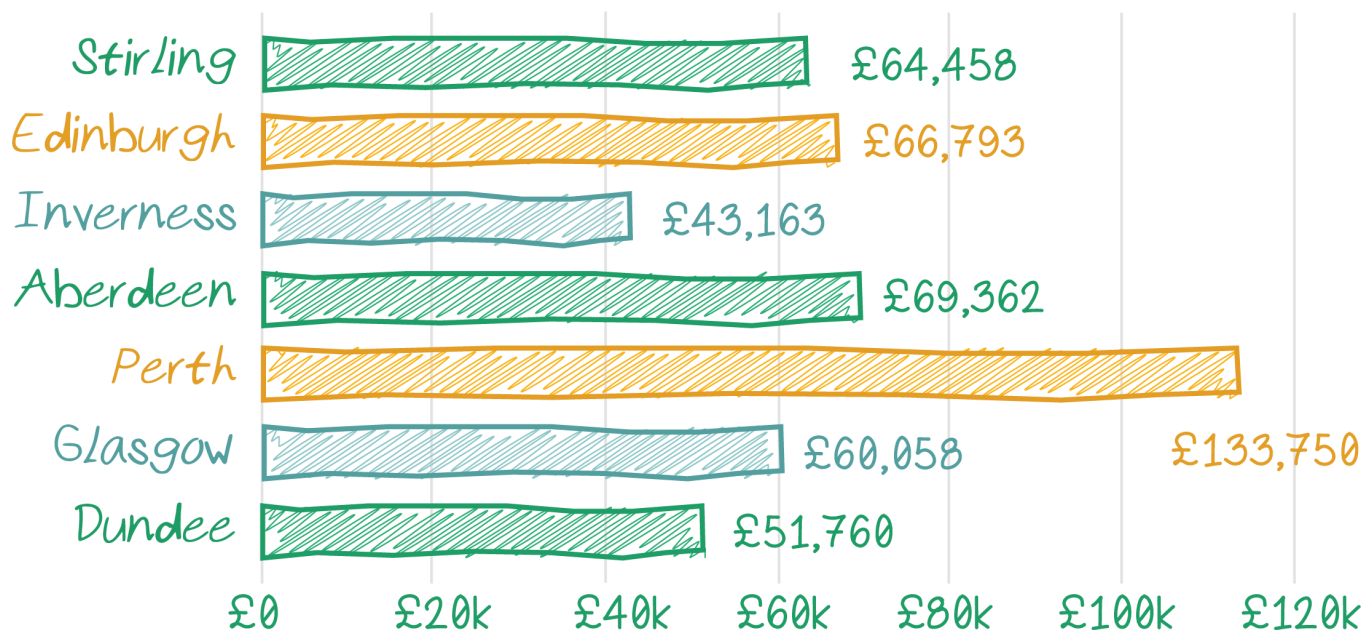
A perhaps more surprising region for high project manager salaries is Scotland. Take a quick glance at the chart below, and you will see how excellent the average is in the region:



(Source: Myfuturerole.com. Average Salary by Region for Project Manager. Available: http://mysalarychecker.myfuturerole.com/salary_checker#title%3A%22project%20manager%22 Last accessed: 30th June 2016)

Yes, a project manager in Scotland can earn over £4k more than a Londoner! Delving further into Scotland's statistics, we can see from the chart below that Perth, Aberdeen and Edinburgh are the highest earning cities in the region:

Project manager salary by city in Scotland



(Source: Myfuturerole.com (unknown) MySalaryChecker - search term 'project manager' run on each Scottish city. Available: http://mysalarychecker.myfuturerole.com/salary_checker Last accessed: 30th June 2016)

So, just what do Perth, Edinburgh and Aberdeen have to offer a potential project manager?

Well, Scotland is home to some pretty wealthy companies who would certainly be requiring good project managers, with many energy, IT, food/drink and financial companies based in the region.¹⁵

Aberdeen in particular is a hub of economic activity, being the centre of the UK's oil industry and interestingly the only UK city to experience economy growth during the recent financial crisis, overtaking London with economic growth.¹⁶

Known as the 'oil capital of Europe', the abundance of natural gas, oil and renewable energy companies has made Aberdeen incredibly wealthy, with the highest percentage of millionaires in the UK located here and around 40,000 people employed in the energy sector itself.¹⁷

Located in Aberdeen alone are Wood Group Engineering, GL Noble Denton, The Cammach Group and Wellhead Engineering - all companies which focus on engineering products for energy, such as drills and machinery, offshore oil exploration and welding projects.

With so many expensive energy projects ongoing in Aberdeen, it surely must follow that project managers with the right knowledge are in high demand, and will therefore be rewarded with an excellent salary.

As seen in the above chart, Perth is really leading the way with project management salaries, with earnings of nearly £45k over the Scottish average. With an abundance of companies in industries such as renewable energy, transport, food & drink and insurance, it isn't difficult to see why salaries are so good in this Scottish city.

Scotland is noted for its booming food & drink industry, and the industry recently exceeded long-term sales targets to reach £12.5bn by 2017, with a record £13bn turnover recorded for 2011.¹⁸ The Scottish whisky industry alone is huge, accounting for a quarter of the UK's food & drink exports.¹⁹

Perth itself is certainly one of Scotland's food & drink hubs, with around 130 food & drink companies based in the area²⁰, including big names such as The Famous Grouse whisky, Highland Spring water, Bells whisky and Taylors Food Group.²¹

And it is clear that big money is being made in this sector, as a new business park in Perth was opened last year, designed to be a hub for the food & drink industry.²² With such a big food & drink industry emerging in Perth, it is clear that project managers with this expertise will be in high demand and rewarded with a good salary.

Moving away from Perth and on to another of Scotland's big earning cities, Edinburgh, we can see that the finance, IT and energy industries are very strong here.

In fact, Edinburgh is a huge banking hotspot, with Standard Life, Scottish Widows, Royal Bank of Scotland and Tesco Bank all based there.²³ Around 35,000 people are employed in Edinburgh's financial sector²⁴ and Edinburgh has the highest percentage of job opportunities available in finance out of all the major financial cities in the UK, at an impressive 16.4% (higher than London)²⁵.

With such an array of big banks to work for, and an abundance of jobs in the sector, it would surely come as no surprise that project managers in the financial industry can expect large salaries in Edinburgh, explaining the data in the above graphs.

The IT sector is also doing well in Edinburgh, with major tech firms such as Amazon, Rockstar and Skyscanner all based in the city²⁶, which has in recent years become a tech hub to rival Shoreditch and Silicon Valley.

Finally, Edinburgh has much in common with Aberdeen's energy sector, being home to large companies such as Cairn, an oil and gas exploration company, as well as Pelamis Wave Power and Aquamarine Power, two large renewable energy companies.

With Scotland having 25% of Europe's wind and wave resources, and a government plan to invest £100 billion in Scottish offshore wind over the next 10 years²⁷, this area of the UK is going to need project managers, and they'll no doubt be paid well.

Elsewhere in the UK

As we have seen, both London and Scotland are great places for earning a high salary as a project manager. London is very obviously a booming hub of business and growth, whilst Scotland is famous for its oil and renewable energy sectors.

But where else can project managers command a high salary in the UK?

South East England

The South East hosts major industries such as aerospace, healthcare & life sciences, automotive, financial services, electronics and the creative sector²⁸, and the close proximity to London, the Eurotunnel and two major airports (Gatwick and Heathrow) make the South East an economic powerhouse.

Figures show that South East England is the second most prosperous region of the UK²⁹, and project managers in the South East can earn on average £55,116 per year³⁰, with earnings of up to £62,500 reported in Crawley.³¹

A huge number of multinational corporations have their UK bases in the South East, and they will all no doubt be wanting the cream of the crop when it comes to project managers.

Companies such as Amazon, BMW, Pfizer, American Express and Unilever all have headquarters in the South East of England³², and there is a cluster of tech companies around the M4 motorway, known as Silicon Alley, which includes Microsoft, Oracle, Dell UK, IBM and Sony.³³

One of the reasons project managers in Crawley may earn more is because of the close proximity to an area known as the 'Gatwick Diamond'.³⁴

With 45,000 businesses and a GDP of £22.3 billion³⁵, this area is obviously a place where project managers across many different sectors will earn more and live a more comfortable life.

South West England

The South West of England is a largely rural area dominated by the tourism sector, with almost one in ten jobs in the area being related to tourism.³⁶ The powerful tourism sector in this region is not surprising, with historic and scenic areas such as Cornwall, Devon, the Cotswolds, Wiltshire, Somerset and Bristol all located here.

Although general project manager salaries in this region are not outstanding, with £50,722 being the average³⁷, project managers in Bristol can enjoy a fantastic salary of between £52,500³⁸ and £67,000³⁹.

Within the South West, the city of Bristol is expected to grow fast during the next three years⁴⁰, with a number of key industries growing rapidly.

Bristol's thriving aerospace, digital, finance and low carbon industries⁴¹ all pack a huge punch economically, with a number of multinationals located here.

Aerospace has historically been successful in the area, and this is evident with the University of Bristol recently celebrating 70 years of teaching aerospace engineering⁴², and Bristol's aerospace museum called 'Aerospace Bristol', which explores the city's links to famous airlines such as Concord.⁴³

Its reputation as the heart of aerospace in the UK means companies such as Airbus, BAE Systems and Rolls Royce all have bases in Bristol⁴⁴. As an advanced and specialised area of industry, project managers in the aerospace sector will doubt command a high salary.

Bristol is also a tech hub, hosting companies such as Huawei, Oracle and Toshiba⁴⁵, as well as creative companies such as the BBC and Aardman Animations (of Wallace and Gromit fame)⁴⁶. In fact, Huawei named Bristol and London as the UK's only two 'Smart Cities' in a recent report. According to the report, Bristol's main strength is in 'digital innovation' and scored highly as a city that is developing its digital technologies and services⁴⁷.

As you are probably already aware, the IT/digital and creative industries require a lot of project management, so the success of these sectors in Bristol will no doubt be another reason that salaries are high here.

With regards to the rest of the South West, the impact of tourism must be examined, as tourism brings

many economic benefits. Tourism is the fastest growing industry in the UK⁴⁸, and there are indications that project manager salaries within tourism are growing fast.

Take a look at the chart below, which shows project manager salaries in the travel, leisure and tourism industry have increased by 40% from last month:

Project Manager salary summary by industry sector

| Industry/sector | Avg. | Range | Monthly Change* |
|--------------------------|---------|-------|-----------------|
| Travel, Leisure, tourism | £52,500 | | ↑ 40% |
| Transport, Logistics | £57,500 | | ↑ 22% |
| Aerospace | £57,500 | | ↑ 22% |
| Graduate, Trainees | £42,500 | | ↑ 14% |
| Retail, Wholesale | £47,500 | | ↑ 12% |
| Public Sector Services | £57,500 | | ↑ 8% |

(*Monthly change compared to the previous month. A minus figure means the salary has gone down.
Source: Totaljobs.com. Salary summary by industry sector for Project Manager. Available: <http://www.totaljobs.com/salary-checker/average-project-manager-salary> . Last accessed: 02 September 2016)

So why is this sector great for project managers? Well, with tourism growing so fast in the UK, it no doubt brings plenty of opportunities and benefits for local communities, companies and councils, who will certainly require decent project managers.

Infrastructure projects increase in areas where tourism is high⁴⁹, as the additional money that tourism generates in tax will go to local councils, who in turn improve local facilities with the hope of bringing in more tourists.

As we examined earlier when looking at London, high amounts of infrastructure and construction within an area provides a boost to companies and contractors. These industries require project managers, and so tourism directly benefits project management salaries.

With this in mind, tourism might be another factor contributing to the high salaries found in the South West.

West Midlands

The UK was once a major global player in the manufacture industry, owing its success to the Industrial Revolution. The West Midlands in particular played a major role in manufacture during these prosperous times, with the region being dubbed the 'Workshop of the World'.⁵⁰

Manufacture in the UK started to decline in the 1960s⁵¹, and many commentators have argued that manufacture in the UK is a dwindling industry.

However, recent figures show that manufactured goods exported from the West Midlands grew by 100%⁵² between 2010 and 2014, with the most popular goods being machinery and transport.

One of the stand-out successes of the region is Jaguar Land Rover. Figures show a huge 20% of all UK exports to China are from Jaguar Land Rover⁵³. The company has factories and offices in Birmingham, Solihull, Warwickshire and Coventry.

The West Midlands is indeed a powerful automotive powerhouse, with the largest number of automotive companies in the UK and amongst the best supply chains in Europe⁵⁴. Rolls Royce Holdings, ATS Euromaster, Aston Martin and Norton Motorcycles are all based here.

Interestingly, Solihull is an area where project managers are earning big money, with reported earnings higher than London:

| Location | Avg. | Range | Monthly change* |
|--------------|---------|--|-----------------|
| Edinburgh | £77,500 |  | ↓ -4% |
| Solihull | £74,123 |  | 0% |
| City, London | £72,500 |  | 0% |

(Source: CWJobs. Salary Results for Project Manager. Available: <http://www.cwjobs.co.uk/salary-checker/average-project-manager-salary> . Last accessed: 02 September 2016)

This could be linked to the presence of Jaguar Land Rover in Solihull, and also because of the ease of commuting to Birmingham and its surrounding areas. If manufacture is returning to the Midlands, it could also be because project managers are in high demand in the region.

With such positive figures coming from the manufacture of automobiles, it is likely there will be more investment in the West Midlands in the future. Solihull is already planned to be an interchange on the High Speed 2 train line⁵⁵, and the government very recently announced a £45 million investment into the Midlands automotive industry⁵⁶. This is certainly a region to get excited about.

Looking to the future

With excellent salaries and an abundance of jobs across many industries, it is certainly great to be a project manager in the UK. As we have examined, London, Scotland, Bristol, the South East and Solihull all stand out as the best locations for project manager pay.

These locations all have excellent transport links, long established industries and are home to some of the world's most famous brands. Being connected to the rest of the UK (and the global market) ensures these locations remain important business hubs.

Industries that stand out for each region include: engineering in London, energy in Scotland, technology in the South East, aerospace in Bristol and automobile manufacture in Solihull.

All of these industries depend on a skilled workforce with STEM (Science, technology, engineering and mathematics) based skills⁵⁷.

For future project managers, a degree in a STEM subject would certainly put you in a good position for entering these industries. However, project managers often enter the role through experience gained, a professional qualification (such as PRINCE2® or AgilePM®) and excellent leadership skills, as opposed to getting the right degree.

The growth of the UK's tourism industry has also had a positive effect on project manager salaries. Looking for roles in this industry is therefore a good idea, wherever you live.

Certain political and economic factors may have influenced the figures discussed in this article. For example, the weak pound has driven export costs down. This undoubtedly has had a positive effect for our manufacturing sector.

Whilst the UK is undoubtedly a great place for project managers to be, it is not the number one country. That would be Switzerland, followed by Australia and the USA⁵⁸. Only time will tell if project managers will continue to be successful in the UK in these specific regions and industries.

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