



PUBLIC PROTECTION

Peter Jackson reveals the importance of implementing robust security strategies to protect public venues

Restrictions have finally eased off and public venues are open again following a long 15 months of intermittent lockdowns caused by the pandemic. However, the level of security in and around stadiums has been heavily criticised and questioned in recent months, particularly following the shocking events that unravelled at Wembley Stadium during the Euros 2020 football final.

Held on Sunday 11th July 2021, the entire nation awaited kick-off with bated breath, keen for the team to

'bring it home.' Despite Wembley Stadium being built to welcome a maximum of 90,000 people, the government, still erring on the side of caution, settled on a maximum capacity of 60,000 lucky ticketholders, most of whom parted with a small fortune to gain access to this once in a lifetime pitch-side experience.

Unbeknown to the event organisers, an army of passionate, and in most cases violent, ticketless fans had planned to descend on the stadium, storming the barriers and abusing any staff or property in their way as they made their way through to the heart of the stadium.

Visitors attending events where physical protection has been integrated seamlessly are far more likely to feel reassured and relaxed

The Guardian described the scenes as: "absolute bedlam", while fans who had paid for their seats remarked that Wembley Way resembled a battleground and the huge crowds that descended on the venue ensured that the security teams on hand had no chance.

Sadly, terrorism and random acts of violence remain a very real threat to citizens, and protective measures must be considered by venue owners to ensure the public can enjoy the site, or space, safely.

In February this year, the government launched a consultation on newly proposed anti-terrorism legislation to protect the general public. The Protect Duty, as it's billed, builds on 'Martyn's Law', legislation campaigned for by the mother of one of the victims of the 2017 Manchester Arena attack.

THE PROTECT DUTY

The consultation will consider ways of developing proportionate security measures in publicly accessible locations, seeking to make it a legal requirement for venue operators and owners of other public locations to assess and mitigate security risks, taking steps to protect the public. Currently, there is no legal requirement to do so.

Publicly accessible locations are any spaces the general public have permission to enter. This includes three main categories: public venues with a capacity of over 100 people— such as entertainment venues — tourist attractions and shopping centres; large organisations retail or entertainment chains that employ a minimum of 250 staff; and public spaces such as parks, beaches and thoroughfares.

Due to the broadly open nature of public spaces, generally speaking, they're much harder to protect. As a result, the government is focused on exploring the most effective way for them to work with the parties responsible for these locations to achieve improved security. This means establishing who is responsible for safety in these spaces, considering what the reasonable expectations are and the potential role played by legislation in mitigating these issues.

While it isn't possible to predict or prevent all terrorist attacks, those responsible for the spaces must be fully prepared and ready to take appropriate action at any time. After all, any publicly accessible location can become a target, at any time.

The consultation aims to provide a robust security framework to help venues feel more prepared for any eventuality, by considering the adequacy of adopted security measures, systems, and processes. The consultation document includes a list of recommendations for venues:

- Be alert to suspicious behaviours, engage the person in a welcoming and helpful manner or report them to the police
- Be alert to abandoned bags
- Be security-minded, especially online. Avoid providing specific information that could aid a terrorist, for example, floor plans with security details
- Encourage and enable a security culture
- Complete and provide ACT (Action Counters Terrorism) Awareness e-learning
- Have a clear action plan. How would you respond to an incident inside or outside your site?

- Periodically review and refresh the risk assessment
- The framework includes three imperative points that all spaces and organisations should pay attention to and build upon to create a robust security strategy:

Completing a thorough risk assessment. This means understanding what a potential terrorist's motivations could be, where they might target, how they might attack and how those motivations and methodologies might change.

Considering security as a system. To achieve a robust security strategy, it's important to think of security as a combination of physical and behavioural interventions. Although installing physical measures such as fences, bollards, CCTV and blast-resistant glazing will stand you in good stead and offer an added layer of valuable protection, it is important to delve a little deeper too, and build and sustain a security-minded culture. Vigilance needs to be encouraged to all those working in the venue and the appropriate training

A DIGITAL PLATFORM WILL LAUNCH LATER THIS YEAR FOR ADVICE AND TRAINING PURPOSES

should be provided for anyone involved in the day-to-day running of the establishment.

Correct installation. Choosing a product and simply hoping for the best is not enough. You will also need to check that your system doesn't conflict with other important safety measures, such as health and safety and fire regulations.

To comply, organisations should be referring to the information and guidance provided by the government, this is also available through the police services. These will become invaluable resources when assessing the likelihood of terrorist threats to the public and staff at the locations they operate and ensuring they're safe.

Designed to aid organisations to imagine the potential impacts of the risks, this guidance will vary depending on the specific functions or qualities unique to the site in question, as well as considering the security systems that are already in place.

Venues should also consider a 'reasonably practicable' organisational preparedness system. This is critical particularly for large-scale events such as the Euro 2020 and Wembley Stadium. While this doesn't mean that all employees have to become security staff, it does provide helpful training and planning so that everyone knows how to react quickly if an emergency does arise at any time.

Most organisations are likely to be faced with budget and time restrictions, particularly the smaller ones. Compliance is one of the questions the consultation is seeking answers to, and while this is still tentative and being worked through, the current suggestions include simple measures such as periodic risk assessments and preparedness activities, as well as staff training.

Although the government is still finessing how to work with the categories covered by this scheme, it is already offering advice on understanding threats and attack methods, practical preparedness measures and

how to stay vigilant and plan for incidents. Further, a new digital platform will launch later this year and will be available for venues to refer to for advice and training purposes.

In addition to this, sectoral and regional engagement days have been outlined in the proposal, with updates and revisions to the ongoing training and e-learning programmes. An app devoted to ACT was launched in March 2020, and the government authorities Career Transition Partnership (CTP) and Centre for Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI) are also providing advice.

YOU'LL NEED TO CHECK YOUR SYSTEM DOESN'T CONFLICT WITH OTHER SAFETY MEASURES

There are also plans for the government and businesses to have far more direct contact with the security industry. Organisations that specialise in delivering and supporting security solutions will be best placed to easily help owners and operators of publicly accessible locations comply with the Protect Duty, ensuring peace of mind for venues that may feel unsure on the correct protocols.

Having access to a market with high-quality advice, products and services for all those who need it is becoming increasingly more imperative. To this end,

the government may consider introducing new schemes to promote and maintain appropriate standards, for example, accredited training and approved contractor schemes or regulations, in addition to all the existing initiatives.

It is brilliant to see a renewed consideration of the importance of integrated security in public venues. At Jacksons Fencing, we have been demonstrating for years the very real possibility of making a site both secure and aesthetically pleasing and in keeping with the existing surroundings, to ensure people and property are adequately protected from danger.

Moreover, we believe security can aid the user experience in a very positive way. After all, in public venues, there are a myriad of important factors to consider. Of course, making it safer for all is key, but other important planning objectives also include sustainability, and how it blends with the surrounding area or adds to the overall aesthetic.

It's proven that visitors attending events where physical protection has been integrated seamlessly are far more likely to feel reassured and relaxed, thus increasing the chances of a repeat visit. Do this in a hostile way and people will be put off.

Ultimately, as with everything, balance is key, and I hope, this article has helped explain that it isn't nearly as challenging as it initially sounds to implement a robust security strategy in publicly accessible spaces and venues. If you are still in any doubt, do seek professional advice, this will also provide peace of mind. Following the important step-by-step framework this consultation sets out has the potential to preserve and protect lives ●

Peter Jackson, MD Jackson Fencing, joined the family business in 1993 and took over as Managing Director in 2015. Since then he has propelled the company to 45th place on the International Track 200 league table in 2017 with major contracts including the Eurotunnel site in Coquelles.

Important planning objectives often ignored include sustainability and how the protective measures blend with the surrounding area



Picture credit: Jacksons Fencing