



# KEEP THEM OUT

*Peter Jackson reports on the importance of organising durable solutions to refine the security of transport infrastructure*

**N**ow that Covid restrictions have largely been lifted, pressure on road networks and public transport has increased again, causing Government officials to rethink development strategies for our transport infrastructure. Back in March 2021, the Build Back Better: Our Plan for Growth policy was issued by the UK Government, focusing on alleviating the demands on transport infrastructure and local communities by modifying the crucial networks. Then in October, in the autumn budget, the Chancellor, Rishi Sunak, announced £5.7-billion is being dedicated to build London-standard transport facilities in cities such as Manchester, Liverpool

City Region and also the West Midlands. Additionally, £2.6-billion has been promised for building long-term pipelines for over 50 local road upgrades, £5-billion for the upkeep of local roads and another £5-billion for developing bus roads, cycle lanes and pathways. These policies and plans are reassuring for both those using the transport networks across the country, and those potentially impacted by the upgrades, such as local communities.

Despite these developments in the coming years being welcomed by the British public, there's recognition that new sites could also present opportunities for increased criminal and illegal

behaviour. As a result, this could harm the safety of the transport infrastructure but also the public. Therefore, it is important the safety of transport infrastructure is taken seriously and prioritised in every development to minimise the risk of harm or any threats.

A survey we recently conducted across the country's railway engineering divisions revealed that 68 percent of participants believed railway perimeter safety needs to be prioritised and improved in every project. Speaking to those within the engineering sector, they expressed a desire to have more contact with those involved in manufacturing the products used, easier access to product specification, and also a better inspection system. In establishing all these factors, the safety of transport infrastructure and networks would be properly integrated into every development project.

During the past year of lockdowns in the UK, it's been reported that criminality decreased due to restrictions. However, in the latter half of 2021 crime rates have mushroomed again. Farsight has revealed that during the period of April to July 2021, crime rates grew by 7 percent demonstrating that there are increasing threats. More than ever, all transport infrastructure, such as railways, motorways and ports should be frequently inspected to make sure they are robust enough to resist any form of illegal behaviour.

## TIME FOR CHANGE

'Vandalism' and 'trespassers with criminal intent' are two prominent forms of criminal behaviour which are currently considered the biggest threats to the safety of railways, according to our research. Other countries have recently experienced more criminal incidents involving vandalism, theft, and anti-social behaviour. This should prompt more checks and improved safety measures being established to prevent these incidents taking place here in the UK, especially as large development railway projects, such as HS2 and Crossrail are currently underway. Performing these checks and introducing these measures could prevent any accidents or illegal behaviour happening.

Each development site, whether it be railways, roads or ports, is distinctive and requires different perimeter assessments and safety measures to fulfil the demands to stave off any criminal incidents occurring. These can include end-user safety, emergency access, risk management and pressing environmental concerns, such as increased temperature, unpredictable weather and noise pollution. Additionally, the welfare of animals needs to be prioritised.

The good news is that potential threats and risks against transport infrastructure can be managed with the right security measures. Implementing these can assist in the smooth running of transport networks, while also making sure sites are environmentally friendly and not detrimental to local communities in any way.

Before the project even begins, make sure a thorough evaluation is done to identify any significant problems. This includes assessing any barriers for the site's perimeter. They must be appropriate in providing security and safety. The way they meet the eye is also worth considering, as this is often forgotten in pre-development evaluations according to our survey. By searching online it's easy to find a range of products that can be installed that both look good and provide

sufficient safety and security. Noise reduction should also be incorporated at this stage. Many transport hubs require some form of acoustic barriers, and there are solutions available which provide both noise mitigation and high security at the same time.

The next aspect is making sure the development meets the safety and sustainability compliance requirements. If you're unsure about what these are then suppliers' websites can often help and can also feature product videos to explain the necessities you need to meet the legal requirements. If you're ever unsure, don't be afraid to ask questions.

## EACH SITE IS DISTINCTIVE AND REQUIRES DIFFERENT PERIMETER ASSESSMENTS AND SAFETY MEASURES

When considering the safety of every site, it is crucial to invest in equipment and fencing which will last longer in order to prevent any costs later down the line. High-quality materials will last a lot longer than those which are cheaper, making them more cost effective overall. Researching beforehand and learning what is the best option for your project will help when managing your provided budget and likely avert more costs on potential repairs and maintenance. Using a fence or gate made from galvanised or zinc alloy-coated steel will provide further protection, therefore extending the product's life, especially in winter months when the weather worsens and fences can corrode or rust.

Polyester powder coating is preferred over traditional paint. This will ensure the coating of the fencing or gates doesn't become fragmented or cracked, adding another layer of protection and ensuring it keeps its finished look.

Higher quality products can often end up being more economical as they are unlikely to need restoring, therefore this is something to weigh up when considering costs and longevity of the products in line with the length of the project. If the project's budget is limited, it can be preserved by avoiding higher security fencing which doesn't fit the projects standards. We recommend gates and fences that are higher quality and come with a guarantee, as those without may well need replacing sooner.

Being methodical when choosing a security system can be beneficial. Choosing a combined approach to security when selecting the appropriate fence and also installing surveillance or alarm technology will help reduce the risk of criminals or illegal wrongdoings. CCTV and anti-intrusion detection alarms and monitors can be used with security fencing and are extremely effective. However, security systems need to be frequently checked to ensure they are working efficiently and performing correctly. This needs to be taken into account on a regular basis.

Implementing these additional security features will deter criminal behaviour and possible offences occurring, so if you have the budget for spending the extra amount, it may help in the long run to protect the site and also the wider transport infrastructure.

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Seeking information from experts or the manufacturers can then give you all the information about available solutions. Make sure to check out the experts' websites when you need to as these often provide plenty of useful advice, information or product overview videos which can help.

## HIGH QUALITY PRODUCTS ARE MORE ECONOMICAL AS THEY ARE UNLIKELY TO NEED RESTORING

If you decide to specify a 'tested and certified' fence, gate, or barrier for a transport site it's imperative that you follow this checklist: obtain proof or certification from your supplier; be sure of your fencing's suitability to site-specific ground conditions; check specifications to ensure effectiveness against specific threats; specify appropriate coatings especially for use in corrosive atmospheres; install in accordance with manufacturer's specifications; carry out regular inspections for condition, damage, and operation; and finally ensure regular maintenance to prevent premature degrading.

Responsibility for the safety and security of the transport infrastructure falls to everyone within the sector, not just policy makers or the owners. The professional engineers who are concerned with the designs and specifying for the railway, roads

and port development projects should be factoring in ways to reduce the risks, and prevent the projects from impacting local communities. These infrastructure plans can create issues, such as noise pollution, so it's essential to minimise these aspects for the sake of local residents and businesses.

## MAKING IT WORSE

Unfortunately, our research revealed that issues during projects, such as having limited time at the specifying stage, strict budgets and little understanding about which products are accessible, can exacerbate rather than ease problems.

Products such as higher-quality barriers and security systems can often be more expensive and sometimes strain the budget, but they are the key to transport infrastructure safety and keeping the public free from harm. Also, in the long-run, investing in educating those who work within the sector about security will help their understanding of what exactly is required on sites and how to help with other prevalent issues, such as sustainability. It is clear that suppliers are eager to share their knowledge of the sector and efficient physical security products, while also helping find resolutions to what is required on a site that will solve costing issues.

With the correct assistance, those working within the industry can learn to understand the advantages of higher-quality security, and work towards the best solutions for their projects so they don't have to encounter continuous problems. Education and advice are key to developing the transport infrastructure and its safety, improving the lives of all ●

**Peter Jackson** is MD of Jacksons Fencing

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Picture credit: Jacksons Fencing