



# PROTECTING THE PUBLIC

Peter Jackson outlines his physical security trends for 2023

**S**ecurity managers responsible for the physical protection of people and property must be aware of significant trends coming into play in 2023. King Charles III's coronation and countrywide celebrations on 6 May are events which many security professionals will need to prepare for. Equally, with industrial action and international terror threats likely to be ongoing through the year, our sector must adopt the latest tools to ensure security and peace of mind.

As we head into a recession, it will also be a tough year of economic-driven crime, materials and labour shortages, and rising costs. Here are my trends predictions for 2023, with some tips on how to address physical security and the protection of people in the year ahead.

## MAJOR EVENTS

Temporary and permanent security measures for public and private sites being used during big events, such as the coronation in May, should be a consideration for security managers. It will be vital to ensure any temporary measures are robust enough to withstand large crowds.

Be ready for new legal requirements to protect the public. The counter-terror Protect Duty bill – otherwise known as Martyn's Law – moved ahead another step in the legislative process in December, with draft legislation set to be published this spring. There is no doubt that this will bring huge changes to the way venues, public spaces and the people who use them are protected.

Currently, apart from at some sports grounds or on public transport, there is no requirement for anyone to take any steps to prevent such incidents, whether by installing

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security measures such as Hostile Vehicle Mitigation (HVM) barriers, having an action plan or giving training. However, in the wake of the attack at the Manchester Arena in 2017, when 23 people died after attending an Ariana Grande concert, this is about to change. Following a campaign by Figen Murray, whose son Martyn died in the incident, the Government is now seeking to introduce new laws that will make it an offence not to take preventative action or know what to do should an attack take place. The Protect Duty introduces a duty to protect.

## SECURITY-CONSCIOUS CULTURE

It's increasingly important to consider security as a combination of physical and behavioural measures. Security professionals hired to make sites safe should consider installing physical measures such as fences, bollards, CCTV and blast-resistant glazing. Certainly, the property owner will need to consider building and maintaining a security-conscious culture.

Choosing a security product, such as fences, bollards or CCTV, and hoping for the best is not enough. Responsible building firms will recommend a fencing and gating system, which does not contradict other safety measures – such as fire regulations and health and safety codes.

As the year progresses, I'd advise organisations and their chosen security partners to adopt a fully integrated approach to security. I'd also advise using the information and recommendations made accessible by the government and police services in order to be ready and able to comply with the weighty new responsibility of the Protect Duty.

At Jacksons, we support the investment in integrated security in public areas. With our security gates, fencing and access systems we have demonstrated that it's possible to design a venue that is both secure and aesthetically pleasing; integrating into its surroundings. It is now well known that user experience of venues can be dramatically enhanced by sensitively applied security measures.

In 2023, the general public is more likely to feel at ease and reassured when they attend events where physical safety has been seamlessly incorporated. Finding the right balance between comfort and protection is crucial. And by working closely with specialist suppliers of security products, venues can be reassured that offering a safe environment is not as challenging as it may appear.

## CONTACTLESS SECURITY

Post-Covid, the use of contactless technology has boomed, as it removes the need for physical contact. People want instant and effortless ways to gain access and go about their daily lives. While tech can pose risks of hacking and connectivity failures, there is an unstoppable drive to automate and digitise most walks of life.

Contactless security for location access is therefore becoming more commonplace. Biometric access, using facial recognition, fingerprints, iris scans and facial recognition to identify authorised personnel for physical access into a building or site, is already becoming the norm. During 2023 we will see more adoption of technologies such as Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) and smartphone Near Field Communication (NFC) keyless entry, as well as QR code scanning for temporary access.

For added security, multi-factor authentication (MFA) – the use of more than one method of identification – is likely to become more widely adopted, making it much harder for unauthorised individuals to gain access.

## SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability continues to be a huge trend and businesses of all sizes are facing more intense pressure to improve their sustainability initiatives and achieve carbon reductions. In 2023, Ministers will launch a consultation on implementing a proposal from the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC), which has the potential to address the source of 25 percent of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions – from the built environment.

## IT IS VITAL TEMPORARY MEASURES ARE ROBUST ENOUGH TO WITHSTAND LARGE CROWDS

As a new legal framework for net zero in the built environment is drawn up, it's important that sourcing more sustainable materials for new builds becomes the norm. When it comes to security and perimeter measures, look for eco-friendly, sustainable fencing and gates, which use responsibly sourced and regulated timber.

The right species of timber for the purpose should be selected by manufacturers before the all-important preservative treatment, design and construction process. If all these elements are right first, then any sustainability/responsible sourcing certifications have a more meaningful context as the best use has been made of the timber and a product that provides a long life ultimately means less deforestation.

## VALUE AND CARBON-EFFICIENCY ARE INTERLINKED

When it comes to decisions around perimeter and security fencing for residential and commercial property developments, there's recognition now that lower-quality panels and gates are less sustainable, and probably more expensive in the long run. This is because replacements and repair are more likely, increasing waste.

In 2023 as recession bites, we will see construction firms and security managers thinking carefully about the lifetime cost of fencing and gating solutions, looking beyond upfront product costs to get the best value and lowest carbon impact in the longer term. The length of the guarantee matters enormously in this context.

## RECESSION-DRIVEN CRIME

A major trend affecting the UK is the cost-of-living crisis which will likely become a recession. Usdaw, the retail workers' union, has reported that shoplifting is up 21 percent this year, largely driven by the economic downturn and people struggling financially. For many large town centre stores, supermarkets and units on retail parks, the rear doors and delivery areas can be targeted by criminal gangs. It's not uncommon for thefts to be perpetrated from pallets or cages that have been unloaded off lorries and are waiting to be moved into the building. After-hours break-ins are a risk for all store and warehouse owners, particularly over the festive season when a lot of high-value stock has been delivered to shops and supermarkets.

While more help from the Government to support retail workers and the businesses shoplifters target is certainly needed, boosting practical security measures can go a long way to deterring these kinds of crimes in the first place. Many businesses will increase their level of perimeter security to help prevent an expected crime level increase. Commercial properties and public use sites may need to have this factored in. Specialist fencing for high-value residential properties may also be a wise consideration for property managers.

### MULTI-PURPOSE FENCING

Effective perimeter security for these sites should be specified in line with the potential threats, the site itself and its topography. One of the key challenges when establishing security fencing for retail sites is deterring intruders while making access easy for customers and staff. What's needed is fencing that isn't too austere in appearance, but nevertheless, does a good job of shielding external parts of the site from harm and intrusion.

Difficult-to-climb security fencing provides an obstacle that will deter thieves, vandals and other intruders from gaining access to a retail business. It's therefore important to select a fence high enough and sturdy enough for the job.

Supermarkets, in particular, represent the end of the supply chain and need to be protected from theft. Measures should also be taken to reduce noise pollution to surrounding areas and control access during times when the shop is closed to the general public, but delivery vehicles still need to be on the site. One solution is to install sliding gates and noise-reducing acoustic barriers around supermarket delivery areas.

Another challenge is minimising the attention drawn to a site with potentially high-value stock inside. Security fencing can sometimes make a site more of a target and attract unwanted attention. If the site is close to residential areas it's also important to avoid an imposing presence, which may negatively impact its surroundings, and put people on edge. Adding timber fencing and a traffic barrier to car parks can make the site secure, but

still welcoming to shoppers while delaying any quick vehicle getaways in the event of shoplifting. Slowing traffic in car parks is a sensible way to keep pedestrians safe too.

### GOODS, CARGO AND BORDER PROTECTION

In 2023, with supply chain disruptions and delays still causing havoc for businesses post-Brexit, measures will need to be taken to ensure ports and shipping containers are better protected.

Unfortunately, goods held at the border between the UK and Europe will still be an issue going. The likelihood is that demand will rise for perimeter security fences and gates at major ports. Jacksons supplied fencing and gates at the Eurotunnel terminal at Calais for a 14.5km stretch of its 41.8km perimeter, with the aim of keeping people safe and out of harm's reach – whether it's those attempting to enter the Eurotunnel site unauthorised or those responsible for preventing them from doing so. The fencing and gates specified for the project were based on the proven '358' wire mesh panel system, a versatile design with welds at each intersection for strength and small apertures to eliminate foot and finger holds and prevent objects being passed through its fabric. It also provides resistance to cutting by conventional hand tools and is employed extensively in higher security applications where it is supported with detection and surveillance technologies. As mentioned earlier, taking an integrated, holistic approach is paramount for the success of these high-security fencing products.

As the government attempts to clamp down on small boats crossing the Channel shipping immigrants – at great danger to themselves – into the UK, it's highly likely we will see a return of other kinds of attempts to gain entry, perhaps through rail, road and shipping transport hubs once again. Security fencing will be in demand and security professionals will need to collaborate closely with government and border force agencies to meet new challenges in a timely manner.

Security and safety contingencies must be baked into operations at these key sites. Professionals in our sector will certainly have their work cut out in 2023 ●

**Peter Jackson** is managing director of Jacksons Fencing.

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Picture credit: Jacksons Fencing