

The Design Council's 'Design Against Crime' campaign began life when, in 1999, a research project exploring the ways in which innovative design was being used to tackle crime was commissioned by the organisation. Carried out by Sheffield Hallam University, the University of Salford and the Judge Institute of Management Studies, the results of this project went on to become instrumental in the Design Council securing further funding from the Home Office and setting up the 'Design Against Crime' programme.

Jump to 2002, and just three years later the scheme has not only published a number of high-profile case studies but has also established itself as a national programme of research and policy initiatives aiming to further the design world's understanding of the larger crime issue. At the heart of the scheme is the idea that the majority of crime is carried out by opportunists who, though they are often very good at what they do, will easily be put off if something stands in their way. In other words, the scheme hopes to promote an ethos where people incorporate anti-theft/anti-crime design into their merchandise from the beginning and so stand a much better chance of ending up with a secure product.

More than just adding locks and bolts

The scope of attention that the 'Design Against Crime' scheme has paid to products and services is incredibly wide. In his introduction to the Design Council's publication 'Cracking crime through design', the organisation's Chief Executive Andrew Summers says: "The idea behind it is not to develop more sophisticated locks and alarms. It is about understanding the implications for crime created by the design of everyday products and services, from wheelie bins – which at a metre high and with

Below: Parksafes MSCP in Derby



a strong, flat top currently provide the perfect 'leg-up' to house burglars – to the average handbag, which tends to be quick and easy to unfasten surreptitiously."

The case studies, themselves very stylishly presented, give a valuable insight into how many companies and their designers have clearly gone that extra mile to fill a security conscious brief. From eradicating crime in a community park to manufacturing a shopping trolley less likely to be stolen, the spread of topics covered is incredible. One particularly interesting study looks at a Korean project to produce a pick-pocket proof handbag, and takes the reader through the steps taken by the Esquire Collection as they add alarm sensors and wire shoulder straps without sacrificing any of the petite detailing so important to such a product.

Cars and car parking as security issues

Highlighted in their literature on the subject, the Design Council praises moves in the car manufacturing industry and the housing industry which they say offer isolated examples of where the design of crime-proof features has actually been a key consideration. Security in the planning of housing estates has been used as a means of tackling previously troublesome areas across the UK, whilst security features, such as immobilisers, are now fitted as standard in most models and makes of car.

The first case study to offer a view on crime-prevention design in car parking deals with the supermarket chain Tesco. The chain has begun to use signs and landmarks in their parking areas so that motorists can find their way back to their car. Making sure parking bays are laid out neatly and simply offers its own sense of security according to their research and by enabling shoppers to walk more or less straight back to their car the chance for car thieves to wander around 'aimlessly', as though in search for 'their' car whilst looking for a potential steal, is drastically reduced.

The paper opens with a discussion on how the chain worked with a former ex-policeman (who had also previously served as the Deputy Chair of the Designing Out Crime Association), and works through in-store means of reducing shoplifting potential; i.e. lower shelves, wider aisles and increased surveillance on selected 'craved' products. This grew into the use of cul-de-sacs where potential thieves would find their route of exit disrupted in the store – a theme which then moved outside and was used in the car park orientation. Greg Lawrence, Tesco's Environmental Criminologist, worked on planning Tesco car parks so that there were no short cuts through the site, although building cul-de-sac roads and narrowing the exits and entrances meant that traffic flow slows down, there is little scope for a thief to run out of the shop and zoom off in his buddy's car! Chicanes have also become a regular feature of their sites and drivers may now have to enter the parking areas at right angles, both with a view to safety for pedestrians and to prevent 'getaways'.

This kind of project proves that car park security is something to be considered from both sides of the picture. Not only is security in a car park an issue for car owners it is also something that needs to be

thought about in the operators mind depending upon what kind of situation the site is in. Retail parks clearly have to think about the store-theft aspect of layout and design as well as offering somewhere that shoppers feel happy to leave their vehicle and shop in leisure.

A BPA member gets in on the act

It's a process of natural progression from the case study on Kenwood's latest thief-proof in-car stereo, through the measures made by Tesco, to the style of car park crime prevention pioneered by Parksafe in their Derby and Lancaster MSCPs.

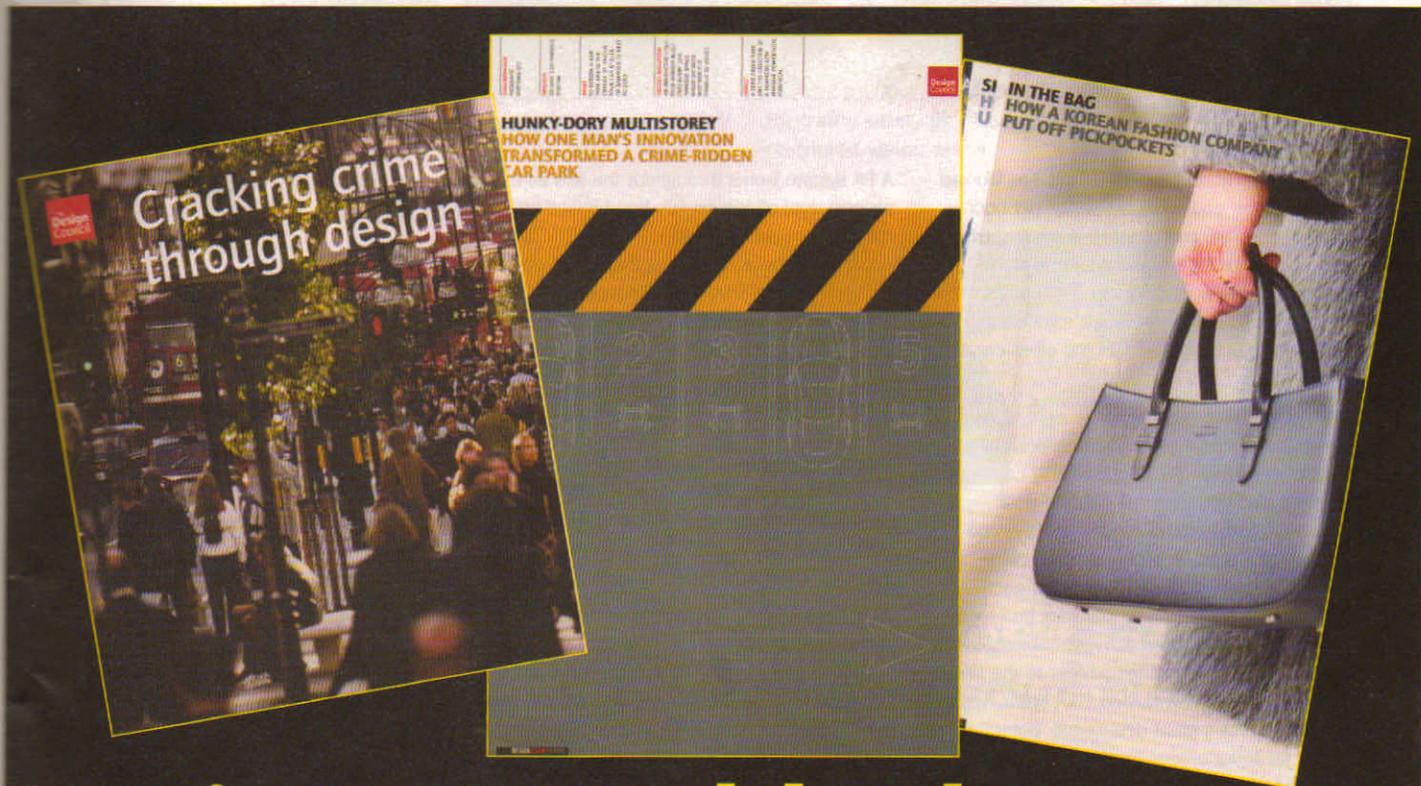
Most BPA members will be familiar with the birth of Parksafe. To recap; returning from a

holiday Ken Wigley went to pick up his car from the long-term airport parking and found it had been broken into. Soon learning that the operators wanted nothing to do with the incident he vowed to set up a truly secure parking facility where motorists would be guaranteed the safety of their vehicle. Jump to twelve years later and the company he set up, Parksafe, now operate two successful car parks that boast zero crime rates.

Chosen for the scheme by researchers from the University of Salford under the leadership of Dr. Caroline Davey, Parksafe now features as one of the leading designs in the case study pack available from the Design Council. Taking around two years to build the system on paper, the case study explains how Ken came up with

a site that utilises individual car sensors in each parking bay, these are activated by motorists at simple wall-mounted machines and then any movement to that vehicle before deactivation on the sensor, will trigger CCTV surveillance of the vehicle and alert staff that there is a potential problem. His Derby site was a former nightmare of a MSCP with high crime levels, vandalism and all manner of things often criticised as the side of MSCPs that the public avoid. Entering into a partnership with the City Council Parksafe have turned around the fortunes of the facility and now regularly fill the place both during working hours and at night, unheard of statistics for the site before the scheme was installed.

Users obviously have to pay for this increased



Designer trouble: better living through CRIME PREVENTION

Back in the spring of 2002 a BPA member was singled out by the Design Council in a series of case studies where good design had been used to reduce the instances of crime. **Justin Merritt** explains the beliefs behind the Design Against Crime project and congratulates Parksafe on being chosen.



Above: Parksafe MSCP in Lancaster

security, and according to Ken this has worked out to just an additional 20 pence per hour over average parking charges: a small sum to pay when knowing that he guarantees the safety of your car and will cover the costs of any vehicle related theft, but a significant amount considering many of the cities car parks are free of charge.

With not a liability disclaimer in sight, Parksafe has to protect its interests and to prevent any fraudulent claims of damage. CCTV cameras scan all cars that enter as proof of their previous condition and images can then be compared if a claim is brought up. Inside there are nearly 200 CCTV cameras each trained on a maximum of four cars and ready to leap into action if an activated bay registers a disturbance. Pedestrian access to the site is strictly via use of the Pay on Foot ticket, which again cuts out a great deal of the 'potential' factor as opportunities for crime are vastly reduced – something that the Design Against Crime initiative is keen to promote.

A PA system works throughout the site as a second level of security, as Ken himself says in the Design Council booklet: "The CCTV system is comprehensive, and so is the PA. If we see a bunch of lads drive in we know to watch for them later. Sometimes they come back a bit drunk. We watch them, say go up to level five, where they think no-one's watching them and then they might start larking about. Play fighting. The sort of behaviour that's fine by itself but can make them all a bit leery. If it looks like getting out of hand, we bollock them! We say, over our very loud PA: 'OK boys, settle down, get in your car and LEAVE.' And the amazing thing is, they always do."

Dr. Caroline Davey visited the site herself and described the experience as giving her: "a real sense of being cared for. The car park is clearly carefully designed and you are watched over." She said that there were a number of car parking sites which were considered for the Design Against Crime initiative, all of which had been given Secured By Design status, but that