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Designers ally with Home Office in crime fight

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A Design and Technology Alliance between Government and the design industry has been set up by the Home Office to champion the role design can play in the 'fight against crime'.

Home Secretary Jacqui Smith announced the news last week to Parliament, as part of the Government's new crime strategy.

Sebastian Conran will head the alliance, along with Design Council deputy chief executive Harry Rich and co-founder of the Sorrell Foundation John Sorrell, among others.



1 Bikeoff Research Initiative's anti-theft bicycle stand

'It is about taking the initiative of design usability rather than aesthetics,' says Conran. 'Making security sexy, desirable and attractive. The draw of the alliance is experience, expertise and common sense, and we will be consulting with people who have dealings with crime. Our project is also about looking at the Green issues, which are becoming important. We will be trying to reduce the temptation and opportunity, and increase the quality of life issues. It might be simple things like rear-view mirrors behind cash machines, or security fittings in homes, security at the concept stage. It is about looking at the salient issues and arriving at a conclusion.'

Building on the Design Council's Designing Out Crime initiative in 2001, the Design and Technology Alliance is based on the importance of design in preventing crime and reducing the fear or crime.

Previous designs used in the fight against crime include beer glasses that cannot be used as lethal weapons because they shatter on impact like a car windscreen and well-lit, transparent bus shelters that protect travellers and make them feel safe.

According to Rich, 'This kind of thing is at the heart of the Home Office and we will work with them as part of a team to find the best ways of integrating design and design thinking into crime prevention. It will illustrate how public services can start to use design.'

TAKING A STAND

- A new Design and Technology Alliance between Government and the design industry has been set up by the Home Office, headed by Sebastian Conran, Harry Rich and John Sorrell
- The Bikeoff Research Initiative design team - headed by Adam Thorpe - has created a set of bike stands designed to make life easier for cyclists and harder for bicycle thieves