

Three years out

With the Beijing Olympic Games successfully completed, **Steve Frosdick** reports on progress with the safety and security preparations for London 2012.

Meeting the security requirements of the International Olympic Committee forms a significant chunk of spending for an Olympic Games. The scope is vast, covering asset and people protection, food hygiene, disease prevention and information security. For London 2012, the *Independent on Sunday* (28 September 2008) quoted a senior official as stating that the security costs could reach £1.5 billion, nearly three times the original estimate, largely because of the increased terrorist threat. With four years still to go, the initial preparations are now well in hand.

As a framework for what is very much an early and partial discussion, I've taken the idea of the five Olympic rings and the headings shown in figure one.

Strategy

The UK government has expressed a clear commitment to delivering a consistent and co-ordinated approach to safety and security in the 35 Olympic venues across the country. Because of the terrorist threat – a reality at the Munich and Atlanta Games – the Olympics are seen as a high profile target. Anti-terror security rather than general safety has thus understandably been the early priority. The strategic approach seems to have been top down, conceiving the Games as a global event threatened by international terrorism, and the early security strategy has focussed on this high level.

Dissenting voices have argued for a bottom up approach, considering the threats to individual venues and infrastructure and then scaling up to the overview. Wembley manages to host 80,000 people for three days in a row for the end of season football play-offs with parallel concerts going on in the adjacent Wembley Arena. The Olympics might be seen as something conceptually similar, albeit with

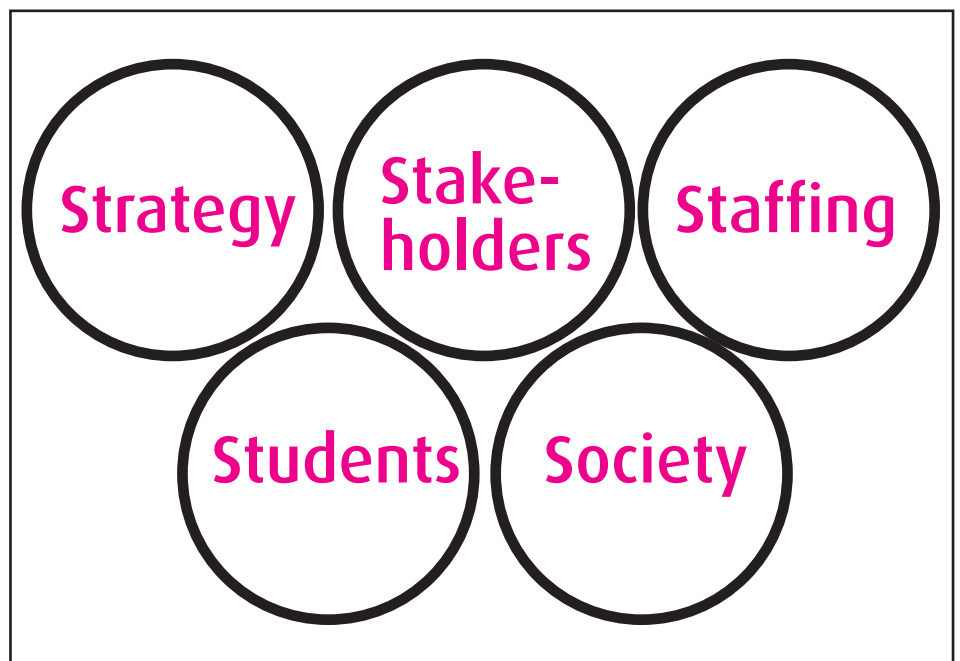


Figure one: Olympics safety and security rings.

more venues, a larger audience and over a longer timeframe.

During 2008 there were changes in the identities of some of the most senior security players, and this may have been a reflection of the political debate about security strategy, which remains unresolved.

But what about safety in the venues and the transport infrastructure? Andrew Amery is the Head of Security for the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG). He explains that safety presently sits within the venues functional area. Key early priorities have been ensuring alignment with the various regulations and official guidance such as the Green Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds. Thus, whilst the safety and security functions are currently correctly separated, Amery feels that, "this will need to change when we move to operational planning". Amery's view is that

"operational crowd management would benefit from being in the same planning area as security". This will be developed at the appropriate time as LOCOG migrates into operations and event delivery.

Mindful of the Grozny stadium bomb, which was placed during the construction of the building, safety and security are being built into the designs of the venues and the Olympic Park. A host of technology will be deployed, however, as Amery explains: "2012 is not the time to be test-bedding new kit". Accordingly, there is a technological lock-down so that only technologies which have reached a particular level of maturity will be permitted.

Consistency across the venues is an important feature of the strategy. As Amery argues, disproportionately target-hardening the eight venues in the Olympic Park could simply displace the risk elsewhere in the country.

Stakeholders

Strategy is being developed within what Amery describes as “a complex international stakeholder map”. To name but a few, this map involves governing bodies, regulatory organisations, commercial sponsors, suppliers and individual athletes. All will have varying safety and security needs, all of which will have to be met. In the UK alone, the organisational complexity is extraordinary, with a legion of different organisations involved in a plethora of steering groups, working parties and the like. Amery recognises the complexities and challenges in this area and is working closely with the Olympic Security Directorate, which is responsible for co-ordinating and implementing the strategy in partnership with the stakeholders.

David Evans is the London 2012 Project Director for the British Security Industry Association (BSIA), which is acting as the lead voice for the private security industry. Debriefs from previous Games around the world have noted a lack of co-ordination or integration between the industry and the police, who along with the venues form the three key stakeholders at the operational level. London 2012 provides an opportunity to break new ground by creating the mechanism for a public/private partnership to deliver safety and security on the ground.

Andrew Amery considers that this partnership could comprise four tiers. The lowest tier would involve trained volunteers who would act as ushers, giving help and directions to spectators on the approaches to the venues and around the Olympic Park. The second tier would be safety stewards of the type one finds in stadia and arenas, monitoring crowd ingress and egress, supervising the viewing areas and on hand to deal with any emergency evacuation.

The third tier would be those stewards requiring Security Industry Authority (SIA) licences to carry out security duties; searching, intervention and ejecting people from the venues. Finally, the fourth tier would be the public police, who would patrol to provide reassurance but also take responsibility for counter-terrorism, crime and major incidents.

Staffing

The Games will require about 100,000 temporary staff to work in catering, cleaning, merchandising and other spectator services as well as in safety and security. Whilst many of these people will be volunteers, there will be challenges in sourcing the workforce. In parallel with the Olympics, all the usual summer and

weekly events will still be taking place, all of which will require their usual staff. This will be a highly competitive market where premium payments may be offered to avoid staff being tempted away.

Evans points out the common problem that venues and the police make their plans in isolation from the private security industry, assuming that it can supply whatever they decide they need. “Which it either can’t,” says Evans, “or sometimes won’t”, particularly if there is other more lucrative work elsewhere.

For 2012, says Evans, “the London candidate file reports that the industry needs to supply 6,500 safety and security staff; and that this is within its capabilities given the appropriate notice.” Subsequent work by the venue profiling team now estimates that the peak requirement will be on day seven of the Games, when 8,000 safety and security staff will be required.

Evans explains the various factors affecting capacity. The industry runs under establishment and people routinely work long hours. Many stewarding staff are on the books of more than one company, so there is double-counting. It will be the summer holidays and some staff will want to watch the events as spectators. Most importantly, the key lesson from the Commonwealth Games in Manchester is that companies should not neglect their long-term customers and so make sure that all their existing contracts are fully resourced.

According to Evans, the stark truth is that the industry can probably supply about one in eight of the staff required, i.e. 1,000 of the 8,000. As Evans puts it: “There is a huge gap between the requirement and the industry’s current capacity to supply.”

One option might be to use the Wimbledon Tennis model. Here the military are deployed as ushers, and about 600 university students are trained as stewards and security staff, who are SIA licensed. But this model, says Evans, “is less ‘plannable’ for the volume required, as planning normally takes place in the year before the Championships. It also leaves less legacy than the concept of using Further Education students for 2012.”

Students

The notion of Bridging the Gap: the Further Education Concept was presented on 3 July 2008 following discussions between the BSIA, SIA, London Development Agency, Skills for Security and the Association of London Colleges.

Further Education Colleges in London and the Home Counties have thousands of students aged 16 to 19, many from the more deprived



Staffing will perhaps be the most important factor in realising LOCOG’s vision of the London 2012 Games.

boroughs in the east of London where the main venues will be housed. The idea is to target those who will be 18 or 19 in four years time and offer them the opportunity to obtain an additional vocational qualification in stewarding and security; the chance to work during the Games; and the legacy of long-term career opportunities in the security or uniformed industries. ‘Bridging the Gap’ will be particularly relevant for students on public services and sports courses. Colleges in the host Boroughs will take the lead and staff tutors could be deployed as supervisors.

Society

‘Bridging the Gap’ envisages a legacy of social benefits. As well as a network of colleges with a common approach to enrichment and additional qualifications for learners, there will be new employees entering the security supply chain and reduced unemployment in the host Boroughs. ‘Bridging the Gap’ could provide a model for future events such as Glasgow 2014.

Evans is excited about how the ‘Bridging the Gap’ legacy could be enhanced by organising a jobs fair after the Games, offering students the opportunity to investigate careers in the uniformed services (military and police) and in the private security industry. Of wider social significance, Amery can see the potential for Bridging the Gap to prevent the young men and women of East London being drawn into extremism or gang-related culture by providing them with a gateway to a responsible career in the police or security industry – model citizens with higher expectations for the future.

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