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News in brief

different sources. Your cellphone collects positional data; it could be emails that you've sent, instant messages, whatever it is. We show all those different types of data in one place."

Olympic fears

Other exhibitors sold hidden camera devices and CCTV capable of recognising the faces of known suspects or criminals. Critics say such technology can be used against innocent people and is another example of a "surveillance state", but others argue it is necessary to protect against the threat of terrorism.

One company, Ultrafine Technology, showcased a covert surveillance device that it claimed could see through walls.

"Sometimes it's vital to know what's happening on the other side of a wall," said Ultrafine's managing director, John Patterson, in a presentation to potential buyers. "The solution is to drill through and insert tiny cameras and microphones."

Conferences and workshops at the exhibition focused on preparations for the London Olympics in 2012. Susan Hemming, head of the Crown Prosecution Service's counter terrorism division, warned of the potential dangers.

"The biggest challenge the UK faces currently is managing the risk in the run-up to the 2012 Olympics," she said. "We could see the targeting of athletes or spectators from countries that we don't traditionally deal with.

Surveillance showcase

The Counter Terror Exhibition (CTE) is an annual event attended by leading experts from government, military, security services, law enforcement and academia.

Showcasing the latest in surveillance technologies, the event's organisers say it brings "focus and clarity" to the complex task of "protecting people and assets from the threat presented by international terrorism".

But critics disagree. Protest group Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT) claims the CTE is an example

Homeless charity's appeal

Manchester homeless charity Barnabus has seen a 50 per cent rise in the number of people seeking its help this year.

Barnabus attributes the rise to the effects of the downturn in the economy and the spending cuts it has led to.

The Christian charity's stocks of clothing and supplies to help the homeless are dwindling and it has launched an appeal to replenish them, helped by local media companies.

Former Miss Cheshire Holly Ikin stars in an advert (pictured) shot at Photolink Studios and made by creative agency The Kings Arms. The advert ran on the video screens at Piccadilly Gardens, with the space donated by Forrest Media.

Peter Green, founder of Barnabus, said: "I can't stress how important it is for the homeless to have clean and dry clothing to give them some self-



respect and dignity. Due to the increase of people seeking our help, the reduction in local services and the harsh winter, our stocks are very low again.

"It is vital we get clothing and shoes, not just for the summer but to build up our supplies ahead of the winter. Any items that aren't appropriate for the homeless will raise much needed funds through our own charity shop."

KEVIN GOPAL

"The authorities are never going to be 100 per cent successful every time, either in preventing an incident or prosecuting the perpetrators.

She added: "London is arguably the most multicultural and diverse city, with the highest overriding general threat level from an Olympic games in recent times."

Although there were warnings about the need for increased vigilance in preparation for the

Olympics, some exhibitors were concerned about a lack of investment from the government.

Nuclear decontamination

Michael McNulty, marketing director of UAVSI, which manufactures remote controlled CCTV devices attached to mini airplanes and helicopters, said hesitance to invest in his technology led him to believe the authorities were more concerned about flying in celebrities than monitoring the capital during the games.

Jenny Mottram, who works with a company specialising in nuclear decontamination, said the government was more interested in contracting out decontamination services than investing in it directly.

"With all the cuts at the moment it has been quite difficult across the industry," she said.

"With the Olympics they really need to think about the potential threat of chemical or nuclear attack."

RYAN GALLAGHER

PENSIONS MEETING

Bolton TUC has organised a public meeting, Hands Off Our Pensions, on 15 June. The meeting takes place in the run-up to industrial action over changes to pensions by civil service trade union PCS and education unions NUT, ATL & UCU. Unions are preparing for a one-day strike on 30 June. The meeting is at 6.30pm at the Lancaster Suite, Bolton Town Hall.

LETS SWAP

A new way to swap services is offering Mancunians the opportunity to save money whilst helping the community.

Manchester LETS (Local Exchange Trading Scheme) is a system for exchanging goods and services without money. Users earn units of an alternative currency (the M) by providing something for someone else, like a lift to the supermarket, and spend them on services they need, like having their clothes repaired. Sign up via manchesterlets.org or call Sarah on 07906 700114.

SOLAR SWITCH-ON

Thousands of Merseyside homes could be fitted with solar panels as part of a huge drive to retrofit accommodation that will help residents save money and benefit the environment. Twelve social landlords and four Merseyside councils have joined Project Viridis, which is being co-ordinated by Liverpool Mutual Homes and Liverpool City Council. Consultants are carrying out a feasibility study into fitting the panels as the first part of Project Viridis.

CARE CONSULTATION

Local people can have their say about changes to contributions towards non-residential social care in Sheffield. The city council is consulting on the changes but the consultation will not affect how stays in care homes are charged for. Email your opinions to PracticeDevelop@sheffield.gov.uk, phone 0114 273 5758 or complete a questionnaire at www.sheffield.gov.uk/fairercontributions. Deadline is 10 June.