

Read the text and do the tasks below:

High-tech crime-fighting tools

Crime-fighting technology is getting more sophisticated and rightly so. The police need to be equipped for the 21st century. In Britain we've already got the world's biggest DNA database. By next year the state will have access to the genetic data of 4.25m people: one British-based person in 14. Hundreds of thousands of those on the database will never have been charged with a crime.

Britain is also reported to have more than £4 million CCTV (closed circuit television) cameras. There is a continuing debate about the effectiveness of CCTV. Some evidence suggests that it is helpful in reducing shoplifting and car crime. It has also been used to successfully identify terrorists and murderers. However, many claim that better lighting is just as effective to prevent crime and that cameras could displace crime. An internal police report said that only one crime was solved for every 1,000 cameras in London in 2007. In short, there is conflicting evidence about the effectiveness of cameras, so it is likely that the debate will continue.

Professor Mike Press, who has spent the past decade studying how design can contribute to crime reduction, said that, in order for CCTV to have any effect, it must be used in a targeted way. For example, a scheme in Manchester records every licence plate at the entrance of a shopping complex and alerts police when one is found to belong to an untaxed or stolen car. This is an effective example of monitoring, he said. Most schemes that simply record city centres continually - often not being watched - do not produce results. CCTV can also have the opposite effect of that intended, by giving citizens a false sense of security and encouraging them to be careless with property and personal safety. Professor Press said: 'All the evidence suggests that CCTV alone makes no positive impact on crime reduction and prevention at all. The weight of evidence would suggest the investment is more or less a waste of money unless you have lots of other things in place.' He believes that much of the increase is driven by the marketing efforts of security companies who promote the crime-reducing benefits of their products. He described it as a 'lazy approach to crime prevention' and said that authorities should instead be focusing on how to alter the environment to reduce crime.

But in reality, this is not what is happening. Instead, police are considering using more technology. Police forces have recently begun experimenting with cameras in their helmets. The footage will be stored on police computers, along with the footage from thousands of CCTV cameras and millions of pictures from numberplate recognition cameras used increasingly to check up on motorists.

And now another type of technology is being introduced. It's called the Microdrone and it's a toy-sized remote-control craft that hovers above streets or crowds to film what's going on beneath. The Microdrone has already been used to monitor rock festivals, but its supplier has also been in discussions to supply it to the Metropolitan Police, and Soca, the Serious Organised Crime Agency. The drones are small enough to be unnoticed by people on the ground when they are flying at 350ft. They contain high-resolution video surveillance equipment and an infrared night vision capability, so even in darkness they give their operators a bird's-eye view of locations while remaining virtually undetectable.

The worrying thing is, who will get access to this technology? Merseyside police are already employing two of the devices as part of a pilot scheme to watch football crowds and city parks looking for antisocial behaviour. It is not just about crime detection: West Midlands fire brigade is about to lease a drone, for example, to get a better view of fire and flood scenes and aid rescue attempts; the Environment Agency is considering their use for monitoring of illegal fly tipping and oil spills. The company that makes the drone says it has no plans to license the equipment to individuals or private companies, which hopefully will prevent private security firms from getting their hands on them. But what about local authorities? In theory, this technology could be used against motorists. And where will the surveillance society end? Already there are plans to introduce 'smart water' containing a unique DNA code identifier that

when sprayed on a suspect will cling to their clothes and skin and allow officers to identify them later. As long as high-tech tools are being used in the fight against crime and terrorism, fine. But if it's another weapon to be used to invade our privacy then we don't want it.

Choose the correct letter, A, B, C or D.

1. Britain has already got

- a) four million CCTV cameras.
- b) more data about DNA than any other country.
- c) the most sophisticated crime-fighting technology.
- d) access to the genetic data of one in fourteen people living in Britain.

2. Professor Press

- a) works at the University of Manchester.
- b) studies car-related crime.
- c) is concerned about the negative impact of the use of CCTV.
- d) feels that some marketing departments lie about the crime-reducing benefits of CCTV.

3. The Microdrone is

- a) a type of toy in the shape of a plane.
- b) being used by the Metropolitan Police.
- c) being used by the government.
- d) able to film in the dark.