

The UK's counterfeit conundrum

London, 6th July, and the first IP Crime Congress comes to an end. Meeting up in the UK capital have been representatives from government, law enforcement and business to discuss the ever-growing threat of counterfeiting and piracy.

Over the two days it has become apparent that a lot more work needs to be done to ensure that a common approach is developed. IP owners want the police and other enforcement authorities to take more action; these in turn explain that often

they feel they do not get enough information from the owners to justify the expenditure of significant resources; while everyone learns that it is no good thinking of the government as a single entity.

The Department of Trade and Industry, which has the UK Patent Office under its umbrella, is keen to ensure that IP owners get the infrastructure they need in order to exploit their rights to maximum effect. But the view from the Home Office, which funds police forces in the UK, is slightly different.

While not disputing that IP crime is a problem, officials say they have yet to be convinced that the statistics relating to losses presented by industry organisations can stand up to proper scrutiny. Is it really the case, they ask, that anyone buying a counterfeit copy of a watch that normally retails for well over £1,000 would buy the real thing if the counterfeit were not available? Is it right that losses should be extrapolated in this way? If so, where is the evidence? In an environment where money is

not unlimited, resources are allocated according to need. Are the needs of IP owners really as great as they say?

London, 7th July, and four bombs explode on the city's underground and bus system. Scores are killed, hundreds injured. All of a sudden, fighting the threat of terrorism at home becomes the number one policing priority in the UK. For IP owners, the already difficult job of persuading the authorities to take their problems seriously has just got a whole lot harder.