Marking the first anniversary of the riots and looting that affected cities across the UK, it is becoming increasingly apparent to those at the British Security Industry Association (BSIA) that electronic security systems - particularly CCTV - are playing a more prominent role in maintaining a safe and lawful public environment.

As reported by the BBC, cuts in public spending have left Police force numbers across the UK at their lowest for nine years, and have decreased steadily since the riots, in some areas by up to 10%. This decrease means that many forces are relying more heavily on CCTV to act as a supportive element in the fight against crime, working hand-in-hand with traditional detection methods in order to maintain public safety.

Indeed, since the riots, CCTV systems have been crucial in the apprehension of many those involved. Recently, CCTV images have been integrated with mobile phone technology, in a move to more actively involve the public in apprehending those responsible for the violence and theft of the
riots and preventing further disorder.

Along with this, advances in the image resolution and technical quality of CCTV devices has enhanced the ability of such systems to act as cost-effective surveillance support for depleted police units, allowing limited national and government resources to be effectively allocated to other areas of crime prevention.

According to Simon Adcock, Chairman of the CCTV Section of the British Security Industry Association (BSIA), “The availability of higher resolution cameras, more flexible IP-based transmission options, improved storage and more advanced software is continually increasing the effectiveness of CCTV systems whilst bringing down the cost. Based on surveys following the riots public space CCTV has widespread public support and provides a major and contribution to both the perception and the reality of public safety, a contribution that looks set to increase.”

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Mr Adcock went on to say: “CCTV is perhaps the most obvious place to turn in the search for technological Police support, and the results gained by forces in London, Birmingham, Manchester and across the UK following the riots support this. It is a technology which has the versatility to work in almost any environment, day or night, and will allow government resources to be spread wider and go further.”

Of the many successful arrests of those involved in the riots, over 3,000 were critically assisted by CCTV. As such, it is hoped that such technology will become more and more an accepted part of public life, and that the industry as a whole will become one of the cornerstones of crime prevention across the nation.