

Fashion Rivals Join Forces to Fight Crime

By Emma Vickers

Retail Week 3 March 2006

High street fashion rivals united to fight retail crime at an anti-shrinkage summit held during London Fashion Week.

Security representatives from Next, Monsoon, Jaeger, Marks & Spencer, River Island and Mothercare swapped ideas on issues such as CCTV, store profiling, staff retention and loss measurement. 'Cabbage' – the illegal selling of branded items on market stalls and eBay – was also a hot topic of conversation.

The forum was hosted by New Look head of loss prevention Stuart Green. He said: "While we are cut-throat competitive in every other way, this is the one issue around which we can legitimately get together and share ideas.

"We're the victims of the same thieves with the same techniques and, if we're not careful, the same staff as well. Fashion product is always wanted product."

Shrinkage costs retailers £1.5 billion a year. The forum will meet again in September and is likely develop into a lobbying force to take issues on fashion theft to the British Retail Consortium and the Home Office.

A topic likely to take centre stage is the relationship between fashion retailers and the police. The industry was up in arms in February after a police constable told Bournemouth shopkeepers not to bother reporting the theft of items costing less than £75

Green conceded police had limited resources, but said retail crime should be further up their list. "It isn't shoplifting, it's theft," he said. "It isn't aggravated shoplifting, it's assault."