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Student's designer city cuts out crime in the Caribbean

A Northumbria University student's research could have a real impact on life in a Caribbean country after she proposed a way to prevent crime through design.

Her proposed framework for building professionals has now been included in the Trinidad & Tobago Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development's draft National Spatial Development Strategy (NSDS). PhD student Victoria Gibson was invited to share her research on Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) - a concept of designing towns and cities in

order to deter crime - at a conference held in Trinidad & Tobago earlier this year.

The NSDS is the overarching framework for the country's vision of sustainable development. The document maps out the socio-cultural, economic and environmental development priorities for Trinidad & Tobago over the next 20 years.

Victoria, originally from Wideopen, said: "We've had a really positive response to our research and there is interest in putting it into practice. In Trinidad & Tobago, design is really bad in terms of crime prevention – with basic apartment blocks surrounded by 10-foot high concrete walls, a lack of open space, lots of dark alleyways and overcrowding, which all helps to generate a sense of fear.

"Our framework has demonstrated how designing out crime can be applied to any context and how it overlaps and supports many other planning priorities. The strategy ultimately aims to remove opportunities for crime, improve quality of life, improve use of space and reduce the fear of crime."

The goal of CPTED is to prevent crime by designing features that deter criminals and allow people to enjoy a safe environment. This can be achieved through landscaping public areas to make them more appealing to use, improving lighting, designing streets to increase pedestrian and bicycle traffic, and reducing enclosed areas.

Victoria's framework centres on embedding CPTED strategies and theories at the heart of the planning and development process by engaging with professionals in these areas.

PhD supervisor Derek Johnson, a Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader, said: "This is a really inspiring development in this research work which we hope will now lead on to us doing some active research in Trinidad, and positively engaging with the planners and developers who are trying to incorporate crime prevention in to their designs."

Victoria and Derek plan to travel to Trinidad later this year to further engage with built environment professionals and will also attend the 2014 Caribbean Urban Forum conference in Barbados to share more of their expertise in the

field.

Victoria is being sponsored in her postgraduate studies by Concept Building Services (Southern) Ltd.

Northumbria University students gain real-world experience with opportunities to study, work and volunteer abroad as well as placements in industry. To find out more about architecture and the built environment at Northumbria University visit www.northumbria.ac.uk/abe.

Northumbria University is holding open days for all prospective students on Saturday 28th September and Saturday 26th October. To book a place, visit www.northumbria.ac.uk/openday.

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