

POLICE

Police Magazine Update

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Drug drivers could escape capture if action is not taken

There will need to be adequate numbers of police officers alongside the right roadside drug testing equipment and changes in legislation in order to target drug drivers effectively, according to police leaders.

The Government is likely to include a new offence of drug driving in a Justice Bill in the Queen's Speech due in the spring and have announced they are going to make drug testing machines available in police stations.

Steve White, secretary of the Police Federation's Road Policing Group, speaking at the National Roads Policing Conference this week, says that there will need to be enough roads policing officers to ensure drug drivers are caught and prosecuted in the first place as well as specific legislation and technology which allows them to carry out roadside testing.

Mr White told Police magazine: "We need to get the legislation sorted out, the technology to enable officers to do roadside drug testing and sufficient numbers of cops with the right skills to enforce it."

The Federation is in the process of assessing how Government cuts have impacted on Roads Policing Units around the country.

In some forces, such as Warwickshire, which has the second biggest motorway network in the UK, there is no specific traffic department anymore, others have seen roads policing departments slashed, such as Dorset, which has seen a 40 percent cut to roads policing and Suffolk which has seen half of its staff cut.

Currently there is an offence of being unfit to drive through drugs but it can be difficult to prove because there is no specific threshold of impairment as there is for alcohol and there are many types of drugs which can affect a person's ability to drive.

Suzette Davenport, ACPO lead on roads policing, said she welcomed drug testing kits in stations but said that there needed to be a specific offence on drug driving – defining levels of drugs and which drugs should be included.

She added that young people in particular 'will use drugs and get into a vehicle and drive' and a survey by road safety charity Brake found that one in nine motorists aged 17 to 24 admitted to driving after taking drugs.