Today, Members of Parliament heard the second reading of the Crime and Courts Bill. This proposed legislation would establish the National Crime Agency and replace the Serious Organised Crime Agency and the National Policing Improvement Agency. The proposed legislation also makes changes to the way in which the courts are organised, including the powers of courts and tribunals and also examines the structure, administration, proceedings and powers of courts and tribunals and addresses issues like border control and drugs and driving.

The Bill introduces a specific new offence of driving or being in charge of a motor vehicle with a concentration of a controlled drug above a specified limit and makes further provision for the taking of preliminary tests to determine the level of drugs in a person's blood or urine. Different specified limits may be set for different controlled drugs, including a specified limit of zero in some instances.

The negative influence of alcohol on the ability to drive safely is proven. Whilst there are very limited scientific data on the levels of drug driving, the front line experience of BMA members attending patients indicates that it is an increasing problem that is difficult to quantify because of the lack of simple reliable quantitative field testing equipment. This is supported by the findings of the 2010 review of drink and driving law conducted by Sir Peter North, which concluded that there is a significant drug driving problem in Great Britain.

So long as progress runs smoothly, the Bill is expected to receive Royal Assent by the end of the current parliamentary session later this Spring.

You can track the Bill's progress here.