

conceded the principle by proposing a natural resource fund for the benefit of the North of England. The fund should be established when economic circumstances allow and should come under the ownership and management of the Scottish Parliament and Government.

We will look to boost Scotland's rural economy by pressing for a fair share of the UK's CAP convergence uplift, which comes to the UK as a result of Scotland's low hectare rates.

The rural economy

The Scottish Government has prioritised Scotland's rural economy and is working to strengthen our rural and remote communities. This includes measures such as Road Equivalent Tariff, a focus on the promotion of our food and drink sector and key infrastructure investment such as the dualling of the A9.

At Westminster, SNP MPs will seek the same level of commitment to our rural industries and communities. In particular, we will scrutinise UK government actions at an EU level to ensure that our farming and fishing industries receive full backing and support.

Other measures, proposed in this manifesto, that will be of particular benefit to our rural economy and rural communities are:

- Protection of the Royal Mail's Universal Service Obligation, the maintenance of the 30 per cent government share of Royal Mail in order to protect the public interest and, over time, the return of the Royal Mail to public ownership.
- The introduction of a Universal Service Obligation for broadband services
- Increased investment in 4G
- Taking forward Scotland's £1.3 billion rural development programme
- Action at an EU level to deliver a simplified CAP
- Work to ensure the discard ban is workable for our fishing fleet
- Our commitment to ensure coastal communities benefit from the net income of the Crown Estate's seabed leasing revenues
- Pressing for a fair deal on fuel prices for rural areas
- The full devolution of all food levies so we can support the promotion of Scotland's food and drink