

Former Labour cabinet minister Douglas Alexander wins the Lothian East seat

Former Labour cabinet minister Douglas Alexander swept back into Westminster after taking the Lothian East seat from the SNP with more than double the votes.

Mr Alexander, who served in senior cabinet posts on Government for former Prime Ministers Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, saw off the challenge of SNP candidate, local councillor Lyn Jardine with a stunning victory – overturning an SNP majority of 3,866 with a Labour majority of 13, 245.

And he pledged to repay the trust of Lothian East voters with hard work as he hailed the words of former Scottish Labour leader John Smith.

He said: “In his final speech John Smith said the opportunity to serve our country is all we ask. Here in Lothian East and in constituencies across the country the electorate has brought John’s words back to life.”

The new MP said: “Being elected to serve Lothian East is a great honour, a heavy responsibility and a huge privilege. I will discharge that responsibility with hard work, humility and a sustained sense of hope.”

East Lothian’s Westminster seat was changed by the Boundary Commission ahead of the election to Lothian East with most of

the county's biggest town Musselburgh moved into a new Edinburgh East and Musselburgh constituency.

The original seat was held by Labour for decades until 2015 when sitting MP Fiona O'Donnell saw her majority overshadowed by a triumphant George Kerevan as support for the SNP swept the county.

Two years later it was Mr Kerevan who lost support as Labour returned with MP Martin Whitfield. Then in 2019 former Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill was elected for the SNP before defecting to the Alba Party.

Mr MacAskill did not stand in Lothian East, instead opting to fight a seat in the central belt, but Mr Kerevan took his place for Alba with independence central to his campaign.

On the night there was never any doubt about the result from early on with Labour supporters relaxed and main rivals the SNP resigned to the loss.

Turnout was lower than in 2019 when 71.7% of voters headed to the ballot box. This time it was 63.9%.

By contrast the postal votes, of which more than 25,000 were issued had an 83% return.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter