

General Election 2024 – Lynne Lyon – Alba Party – Edinburgh South

Lynne Lyon is Edinburgh's sole Alba Party candidate in the upcoming general election, running to replace Labour's Ian Murray as Edinburgh South's MP.

The Alba candidate was born and bred in the area, having gone to both primary and secondary school in the constituency and she said she has had the same GP all of her life.

Ms Lyon said the constituency is “in my heart” and her work as a constituency caseworker for Edinburgh South exposes her to the voters' numerous concerns.

She said: “I get a lot of things through the inbox, people's concerns, cost of living, food, mental health, GP services, NHS services, expediting appointments – so I know before I get around the doors in Edinburgh Southern constituency exactly the concerns that people are going to raise with me. It's really important for me because I strive really hard to get good outcomes from my constituents.”

However, as a member of the Alba Party, founded by former SNP leader Alex Salmond, Ms. Lyon's primary focus is on Scottish independence, telling me that a vote for her is a vote for independence. But there has been widespread concern that a vote for Alba, rather than fellow independence-supporting SNP, would split the independence vote in constituencies like

Edinburgh South. How did the candidate respond to this?

She replied: "No, no, not true. So the latest polling, there's over 50% of people in Scotland still support independence and 30% of them will vote SNP. The 20% who didn't have a candidate, before [we] stood, had said that they wouldn't actually vote because they had nobody to vote for. So obviously independence was the priority, but they didn't want to vote SNP. I would say we're mobilising the Vote, galvanising it, to get as many pro independence parties. And for me, that is not splitting a vote; that is absolutely galvanising it."

So, as Edinburgh South's MP, would Ms. Lyon only bring independence matters before Westminster at the expense of other issues?

She said: "Well, you're an MP so obviously you would absolutely always raise the cause of independence because I believe Scotland would be far better off being independent. In terms of the Westminster parties at the moment, Conservative and Labour... "Big change", Labour's saying. I don't see any change. I see an exchange where they're not going to serve Scotland well. I absolutely don't see these parties serving Scotland well at all."

But it won't be an easy task for the Alba candidate. The constituency has been represented by Labour's Ian Murray since 2010, who even survived the SNP's landslide of Scottish seats in 2015. Does Ms Lyons think she can beat him?

She replied: "Well, of course, you wouldn't be in it. And the feedback I'm getting around the doors is "what's Ian Murray ever done for Edinburgh South, could you name anything?" They couldn't name one thing. Some of them are saying, "Oh, well, we're probably just gonna vote how we always vote" and the thing I found really quite alarming was people who do not know what is devolved and what's reserved. So I've spent a lot of

time round the doors to say what the powers Scottish Government have at present, and which the Westminster government has, and obviously we don't have the real powers, the levers, to absolutely be in charge of our own destiny. A lot of people were surprised at that.

"Another conversation I had with two ladies the other day there was, and it's no disrespecting these ladies, of course, because we were talking about other countries in the world. I mean, do you know like small size, same kind of population size – Denmark, Norway – and they said that they didn't know Denmark and Norway were independent countries, so to me it's all about making the voters aware. So when they are voting, they have a real informed choice and for me it's about informing the voters. Politics as well, you have to be very truthful with politics. And that's, for me, what I want to break through: truth. Let people know the facts, so they make an informed choice. And I think that's important and that's what I've been doing around the doors."

When I asked her how people on the doorstep responded to this strategy, and to her campaign in general, she told me that the reaction has been positive.

She said: "I've had really good feedback and obviously having lived in the area all my life, you're opening doors and they're opening them and saying, "Oh! You're standing?" Then obviously get their concerns, telling what their aspirations are as well. It's been really good feedback from the doors."

Another hurdle for the Alba candidate is Edinburgh itself: unlike other parts of Scotland, Edinburgh's rejection of independence in the 2014 referendum was fairly decisive. I asked Ms Lyon how she felt running with this in mind; and if that's the reason why she's Alba's only Edinburgh candidate.

She said: "Well, we do know that Edinburgh wasn't a Yes city and when all the candidates were putting themselves forward, I

realised that the major city, which is Edinburgh, didn't have a candidate. We had one in Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee. I thought, no, I have to stand for Edinburgh and you never know. A lot has happened since 2014. Since Brexit, people's priorities changed, of course they do. Mine have changed, not in terms of independence, but my priorities. I'm now a grandma. I've got twin grandsons. So, my priorities are absolutely to have a brilliant future for these boys growing up and that's why I'm campaigning."



Lynn Lyons