

Josh Taylor officially presented with the Freedom of East Lothian

World boxing champion Josh Taylor was officially presented with the Freedom of East Lothian at a ceremony last night – three years after it was originally awarded to him.

The Tartan Tornado, who was born and raised in Prestonpans in the county, won Commonwealth Gold in Glasgow in 2014, a year before turning professional.

In May 2021, he became the first British fighter to become an undisputed light-welterweight world champion in the 'four belt era' by simultaneously holding world titles from all four bodies: World Boxing Association, World Boxing Council, World Boxing Organisation and the International Boxing Federation.

East Lothian councillors voted the following month to make Josh a Freeman of the county however due to Covid restrictions and the boxer's training and fighting commitments, they were unable to hold a civic ceremony until last night.



East Lothian boxer Josh Taylor and his family attended civic ceremony to present him with his Freedom of East Lothian certificate (L-R) sister Finch, wife Danielle, Josh and parents Diane and Jamie pic ELC

East Lothian Provost John McMillan presented the award and praised Josh for reaching his goals through hard work and dedication.

He was joined at the ceremony by the wife and daughter of the late council leader Willie Innes, who passed away a few months after the decision in November 2021.

Councillor McMillan told those attending that it was Councillor Innes who fought for funding to ensure he was able to follow his dream.

He said: "Councillor Willie Innes recognised your potential as you were coming through the amateur ranks and was keen to make sure that you were able to develop your talents and compete on bigger and better stages.

"He worked with council officers to identify financial support

for you, Josh, and other East Lothian athletes who were preparing to compete in the 2012 London Olympics and 2014 home Commonwealth Games.

“H was so proud when he saw you achieve Gold in Glasgow and again when you became World Champion.”

Councillor McMillan added: “I hope that this honour will be as much a source of pride for you as your Olympic and Commonwealth medals.

“Every step you have taken in your sporting career, your achievements in the ring and on the world boxing stage, have brought you to this moment and we are proud that you’re here to share it with us and to be recognised by the county that is home to you.”

The Freedom of East Lothian is awarded as a mark of respect, although historically it once offered certain rights to the ‘freeman’.

Josh received the award watched by proud parents Jamie and Diane as well as his wife Danielle and sister Finch.

He thanked Councillor Innes and East Lothian Council for their support in helping him reach the top of the sport.

He said: “It was great of East Lothian Council to get behind me so early on in my career.

“Almost until I turned professional, they supported me. It is a huge thank you and it goes a long distance and has definitely played its part in me being able to continue the journey to get to where I got to.

“Without that, I would not have reached it.”

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter