



# Commission on the Future of Localism

## Polling Findings

The Commission on the Future of Localism has been investigating what is required to reinvigorate local democracy and unleash the power of community.

Seven years on from the passage of the Localism Act, the fundamental shift in power away from Westminster promised by the legislation has not been achieved. Devolution is also failing to directly address local participation and neighbourhood control.

Over the past nine months, the Commission has gathered evidence and ideas from policy-makers, local leaders, organisations and communities across the country through evidence events, focus groups, calls for written evidence and survey responses.

**We have also commissioned a national opinion poll, conducted by YouGov, to find out what the public think about where power lies.<sup>1</sup>**

Here's what we've learnt...

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<sup>1</sup> YouGov polled 1,628 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 4th-5th January 2018. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

## 1. People feel like they have no control over the decisions that affect their lives – and don't think Brexit will help “take back control”

**80%** feel they have not much or no control over decisions that affect the country

**71%** feel they have not much or no control over the important decisions that affect their neighbourhood and local community

**50%** think Brexit will make no difference at all to the amount of control they feel over important national decisions – and this figure is the same even for those who voted to leave the EU in the 2016 referendum

**13%** think Brexit will make them feel *less control* nationally, and only **20%** think it will give them *more control*

**70%** say that Brexit will give them either the same, or even less control, over decisions that affect their local neighbourhood or community.

## 2. People think community spirit is weak in general, but strong in their own neighbourhood

**68%** people think community spirit in Britain has declined over the last 10 or 20 years

**65%** think community spirit nationally is “weak”.

But when thinking about their own area, people are more likely to think community spirit is fairly strong - **37%** - than fairly weak - **32%**

People are **twice as likely** to think that community spirit is strong in their own area as they do nationally: **41% v 20%**

### 3. People think the balance of power is the wrong way round.

When asked, “who do you think currently has most say over what happens in your local area”, **25%** said national government and politicians in Westminster, **49%** said local government and only **3%** thought it was local people.

However, when asked who *SHOULD* have the most say, only **3%** thought it should be national politicians and only **26%** thought it should be the local council – with the overwhelming majority - **57%** - wanting local people from their own community to be calling the shots.

Currently has most say		Should have most say
<b>25%</b>	National Government	<b>3%</b>
<b>49%</b>	Local Government	<b>26%</b>
<b>3%</b>	Local People	<b>57%</b>

**73%** think local people should have more say about the future of public services, the local economy and the local environment, versus only **8%** who think they should not.

**63%** think public services are best when decisions are made locally, compared with only **10%** who think they are best when decisions are made nationally.

#### 4. People would like to get more involved in their community – but find it difficult to do so.

Only **18%** say they are currently involved in their local community compared with **82%** who are not

**67%** say they find it difficult to get involved

**30%** would like to get more involved – and **32%** don't know if they would or not.

This **62%** is the potential untapped 'power of community'

#### 5. The vast majority of people are unaware of government's attempts to decentralise power

**79%** are unaware of the Community Rights

**71%** are unaware of devolution

## *About the Commission on the Future of Localism*

The ambition behind the Localism Act is in danger of waning, and the fundamental shift in power from Westminster to communities has not yet been achieved. Localis established the Commission on the Future of Localism in 2017, in partnership with Power to Change, to consider how to reinvigorate localism and unlock the power of community.

### **About our Commissioners:**

- Lord Kerslake (Chair) President of the LGA and former Head of the Home Civil Service
- Alison Haskins, CEO of Halifax Opportunities Trust
- Joanna Holmes, CEO of Barton Hill Settlement
- Neil Johnson, CEO of Paddington Development Trust
- Lisa Nandy, Member of Parliament for Wigan
- Laura Sandys, former Member of Parliament for South Thanet, and Vice President of Civic Voice
- Councillor Sharon Taylor, Leader of Stevenage Borough Council
- Professor Jane Wills, University of Exeter, and author of 'Locating Localism: Statecraft, citizenship and democracy'