



THE **PEOPLE'S** POWERHOUSE



**Dormanstown**



**Southbank**



**Eston**



**Loftus**

---

People's Voices in Redcar and Cleveland

---

## About the People's Powerhouse

---

The People's Powerhouse is a pan Northern movement made up of over 625 people and organisations from across the North of England. Our work focuses on amplifying the voices of people and communities who often are left out of the big conversations around the future of the North and their lives.

We see increasingly that conversations about the future of the North are one dimensional, with phrases like inclusive growth and agglomeration used when in reality this means very little to most people.

We believe when you open the conversation up to more and different voices the richness and diversity that brings will be the catalyst for change.

You can find out more about our work [peoplespowerhouse.org.uk](https://peoplespowerhouse.org.uk) or by emailing [people@peoplespowerhouse.org.uk](mailto:people@peoplespowerhouse.org.uk)

## Introduction

---

In March 2020 People's Powerhouse went to Redcar and Cleveland, with the sole aim of hearing from people who are often not heard. We listened to people in Dormanstown, South Bank, Eston and Loftus; all communities that surround Middlesbrough, and sit within the boundaries of Redcar and Cleveland local authority.

Partnering with Beyond Housing, we attended the community cinema events they were hosting for their residents. This gave us the opportunity to speak to people about two main things: what do they like most about their community and how can it improve.

The conversations were informal and took place one to one, giving people the time to think about their area and answer questions many had never been asked before.

We want to use this information to help build a bigger picture across the North of England about what matters to people most and highlight where there are local differences.

In this report we present the top priorities from the four communities we visited and highlight where there are competing priorities emerging from the different areas. We will share what people said and how they said it.

We want to thank Beyond Housing for supporting us in this project, and for providing additional qualitative survey data from residents to support our findings.

## Key findings across all four communities

### The positives about the area

One of the reasons some people do not have a voice in local, regional, and national decision making is that the place or community that they call home is not perceived as being a desirable place to live. These communities are often labelled as 'left behind', with almost all of the external narrative concentrating on what is wrong or lacking in these communities, and barely ever celebrating the good and positives about the places that many people call home.

We believe that the North is rich and diverse, a place where all places and people should be celebrated equally. There is much to be proud of in the communities of Redcar and Cleveland and so the first thing we discussed with everyone we spoke to is what makes them most proud of where they live.

### Top three over all responses



**22% of all people that we spoke to mentioned sense of community spirit** as being the thing they are most proud of about where they live.

***'It's a good community, if anything happens there's always help, if anything happens everyone always comes together'.***

*South Bank*

***'There's a great sense of community spirit, I know a lot of people. The community fundraise for people when they fall on hard times'***

*Dormanstown*

A further **17% of people** said that it is **the people in their community** that makes it a great place to live, with 10% attributing this to their neighbours.

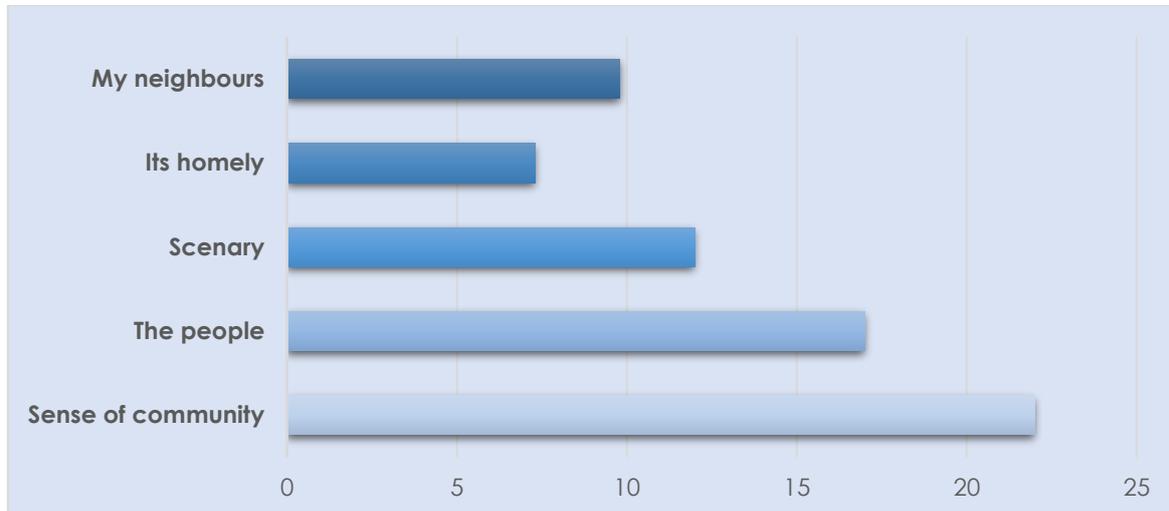


Figure 1, what people are most proud of, by percentage

## Improvements

We then asked each person what they think needs some improvement and investment in their area. Thinking about where they would spend money first if they could choose. There were some significant differences by area which we will look at later in this report.

### Top three over all responses



**Highstreet**

'Eston square hasn't been touched since the 60's'

---



**Motorbikes**

In Dormanstown in particular this presented as a problem.

'The kids can't play out because of the problems with the number of motorbikes speeding.'

---



**Things for the kids**

A lot of the families we spoke to would like to make better use of the local parks, but are unable to due to 'vandalism and broken glass'.

'The park is run down.'

---

**18% of people mentioned their Highstreet and the problems with motorbikes** as their biggest priority for improvement in the area. These issues were highly prioritised in Loftus and Dormanstown respectively and therefore seemingly appear to be hyper local needs.

*'You could get everything in Loftus, now the high street is so rough'.  
Loftus*

*'The first thing I'd do is get rid of the motorbikes, that are causing trouble round the back of my house.'  
Dormanstown*

**A further 11.5% said that there needs to be more for the kids** to do in the area, particularly around improvements in the local parks. This priority was not community specific but mentioned in all four neighbourhoods.

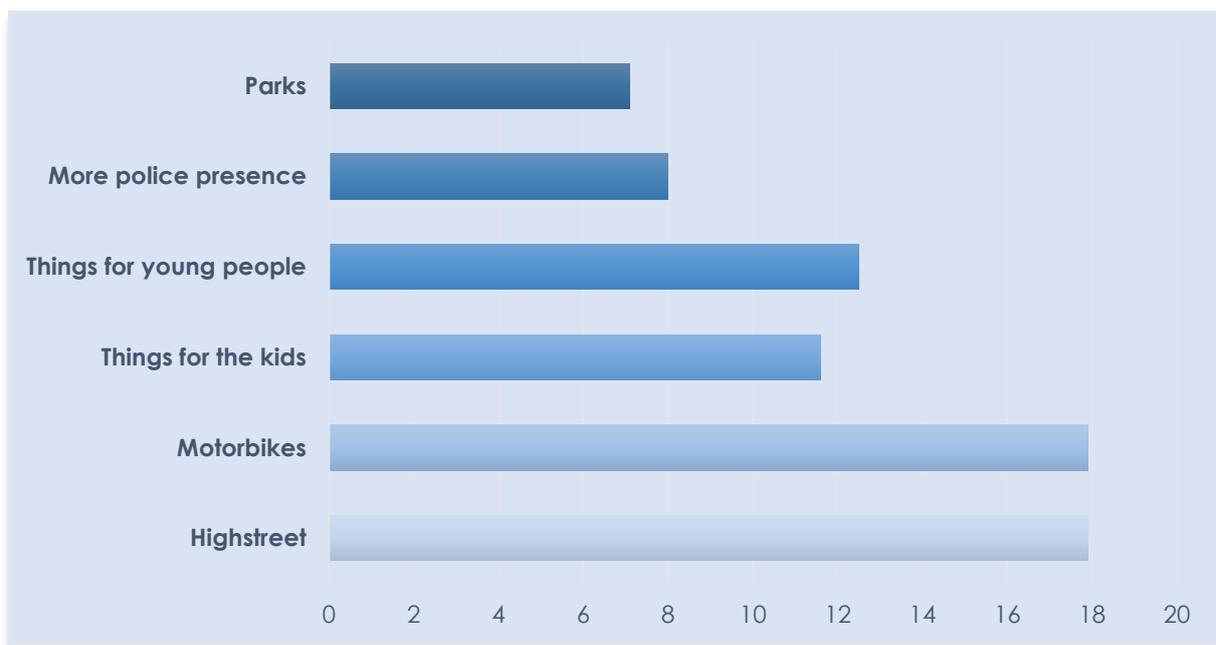


Figure 2, what people want to see improved, by percentage

## Hyper – local differences

There were some common themes between areas, particularly when thinking about what makes people feel proud about their community. Prioritising of services and activities for children and young people were also commonly heard. However, some hyper-local themes emerged, showing that some issues are of concern to certain communities. This re-enforces the need for local decision making and empowerment to make positives changes as even at local authority level the differences in neighbourhood priorities can be significant.

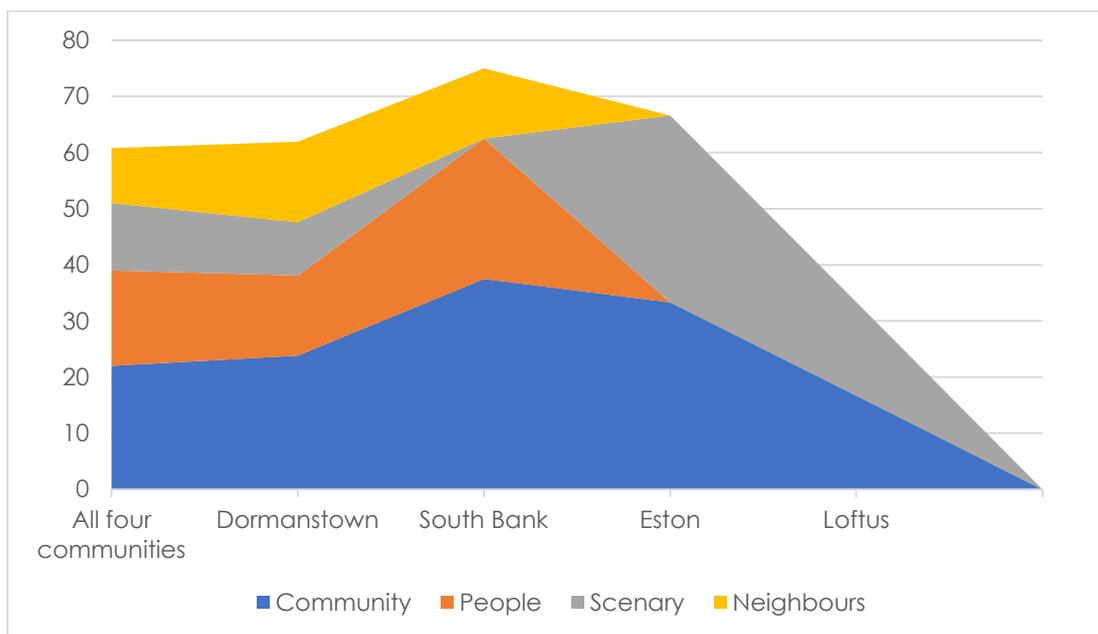


Figure 3, what people like in their area, by community

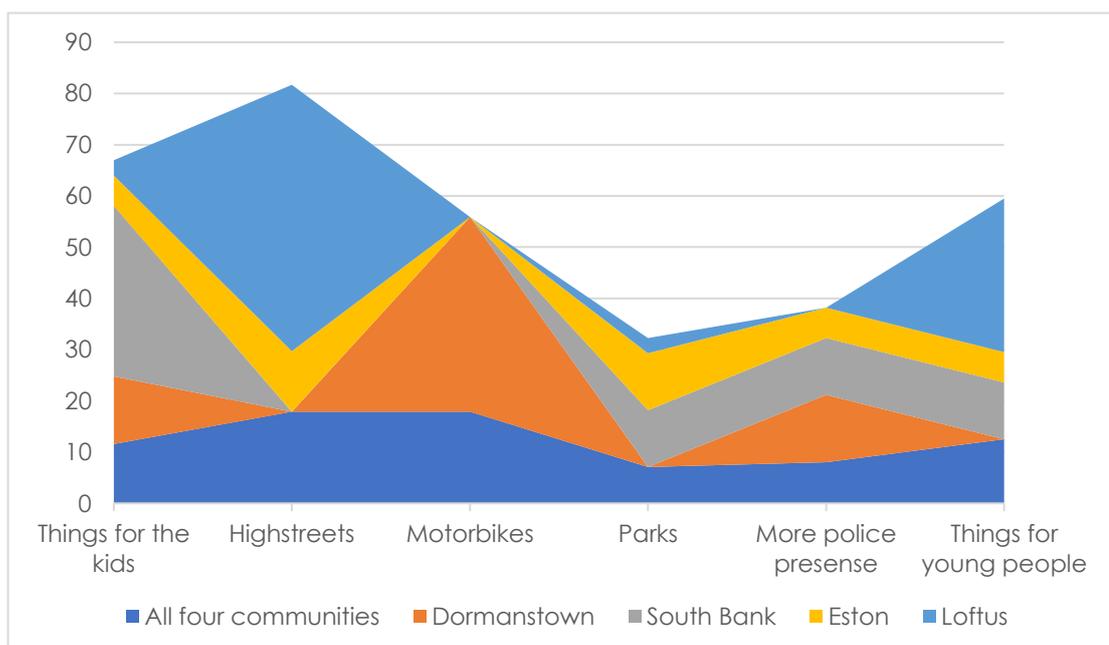


Figure 4, what needs improvement, by community

## Dormanstown

Dormanstown Village was built in 1920 because of the increased amount of labour needed in Dorman Long iron and steel works to manufacture munitions for the UK in World War I. The population of Dormanstown in total is 6,755, our conversations took place in Dormanstown West, with families who occupy the 130 homes owned by Beyond Housing in that area. It is a small community that only makes up a matter of streets.

The positives we heard from people broadly reflected the overall feedback from the four communities. With sense of community and people featuring at the top of the list.

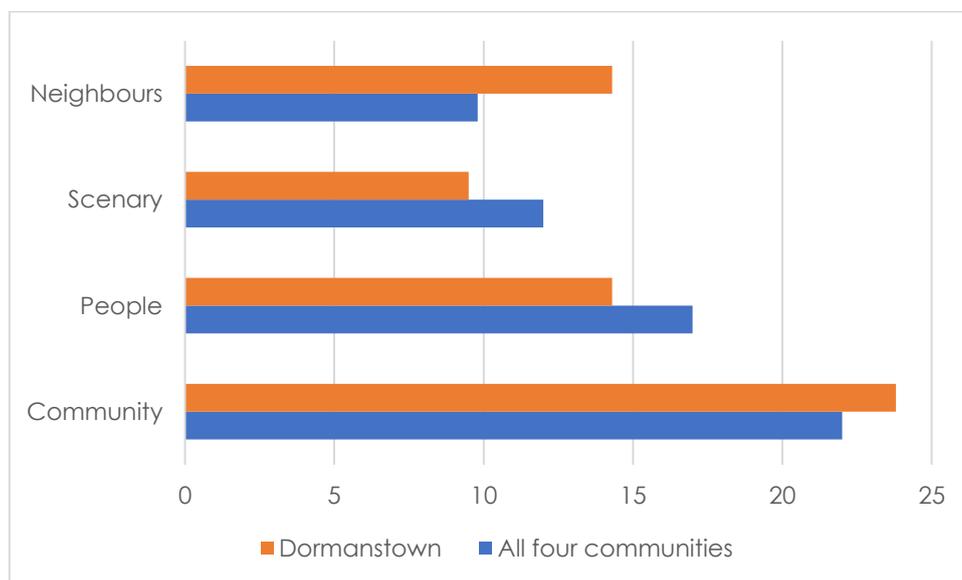


Figure 5, things people like all four communities and Dormanstown, by percentage

There was a notable difference in people's response to this question in comparison to the other three communities. People struggled to give an answer to the question and we often had to go back at the end of the conversation to revisit the question. When the question was revisited people were not generally negative about where they lived but many had never been asked to describe the area in a positive way before.

*'I have lived here for 14 years, the community is very close, like family'.*

*'The community pulls together when someone needs help'*

*'It's beautiful here the beach, the moors and the people are really friendly'.*

Our conversations in Dormanstown highlighted a hyper-local issue of problems with motorbikes. Dormanstown West has a plot of land in the middle which is used to drive motorbikes up and down at great speed. The over all findings show motorbikes as a top three priority for the area; all these conversations took place in Dormanstown. There were also many people who mentioned the need for an increase in police presence, which was almost always in relation to the problems with motorbikes in the area.

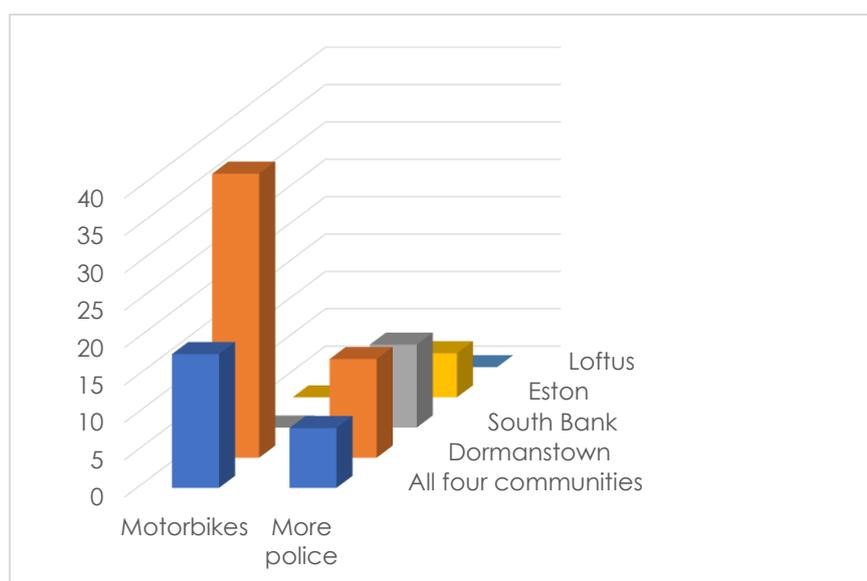


Figure 6, motorbikes and police, by area and percentage

## South Bank

South Bank is only three miles away from Middleborough with a population of 6,548. It has a long history of steel making, in particular ship building. The area forms a major part of the Greater Eston regeneration project. Our conversation took place at Golden Boy Green Community Centre which is used by many members of the community and includes a skate park. The centre had stood empty until 2012 following an arson attack which was described as 'soul destroying' by members of the community.

Again, the positives we heard from people broadly reflected the overall feedback from the four communities. With sense of community and people featuring at the top of the list once again. This included a lovely conversation about the local Christmas markets organised by the local community headed up by South Bank resident Christine.

Activities for the kids featured top of the priority list by a long way, with over 30% of people mentioning this as an issue that needed addressing. There was an emphasis on safety for parents to feel comfortable allowing children to play out and the need for good role models in the area for children to look up to.

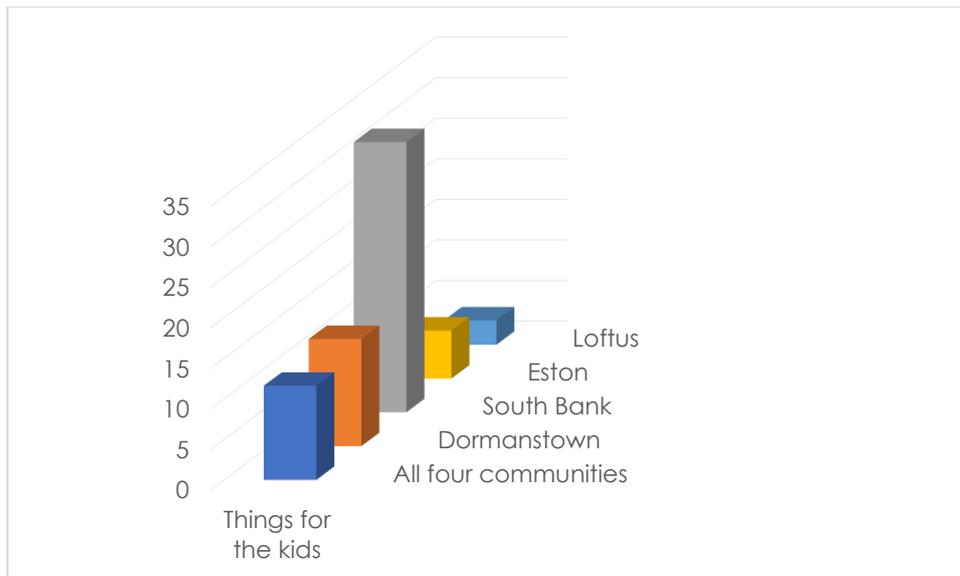


Figure 8, thing for the kids, by area and percentage

***'Its all about having good role models, to teach the motivation to go to college, then uni, to get a good job'.***

***'The place needs to feel more secure; the kids can't play out cos it's not safe enough'.***

## Eston

Eston has a population of 7,005 and is a 19<sup>th</sup> century mining town. The area has a shopping area called Eston Square which serves not only Eston but many of the surrounding communities. The town sits at the foot of Eston hills, which is home to lots of wildlife, the hills were central to many of our conversations and something which the community is very proud of.

Although community features high on the list of things people in Eston are proud of, scenery came top of the list with people talking at length about how much they enjoy visiting the nearby hills.

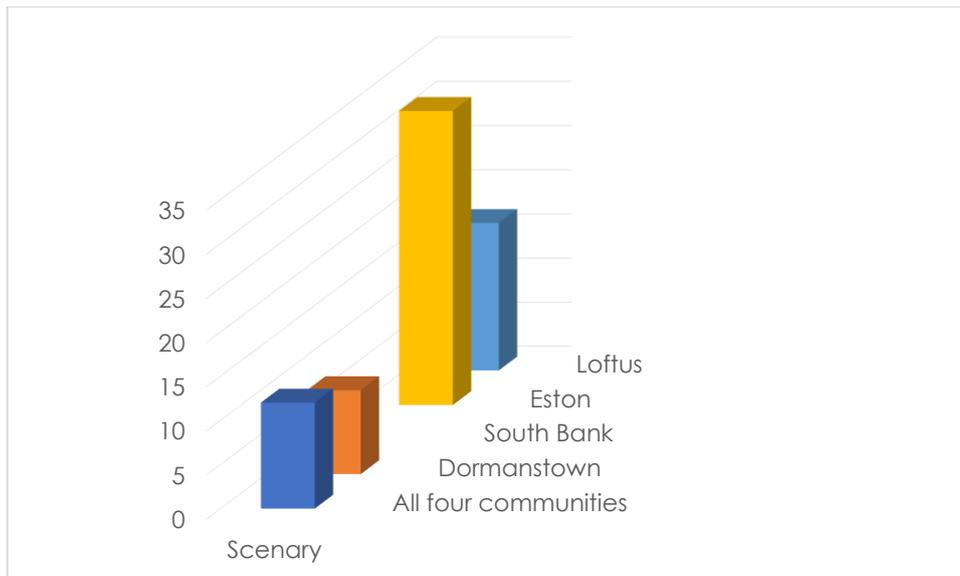


Figure 9, scenery, by area and percentage

***'We go to the hills three times a week with the kids. Take a packed lunch and you're set for the day'.***

Along with Loftus, the high street was top on the list of priorities. Eston square was mentioned numerous times as being in need for some improvement, particularly in terms of increasing availability of local services and the number of local businesses.

***'The post office is on reduced hours and this is causing a lot of problems for older people who can't go into Middleborough'.***

***'We need more local, little shops'.***

## Loftus

Loftus is a town and parish council with a population of 7,988 people. It has its own town hall, which is where our conversations took place, the town hall is situated on the high street which has a few shops, tea rooms and a Co-op. Different to the other places we visited, people in Loftus mentioned specific improvement to buildings and services that would have cost a considerable amount more money than what was mentioned in the other communities.

A sense of community and the local scenery topped the list of things people like about where they live, with many people referring to local services (such as the library), community

centres and their memories of what the high street and community used to like in Loftos when they first moved into the area.

***'We have some good facilities here, I make good use of the library, civic hall and village events.'***

The high street featured very heavily in Loftus, with over 50% of people mentioning it as a priority. Many people reminisced about what the high street used to be like and how many of the shops are now either empty or the turnover of occupancy is high due to very little support for small businesses locally.

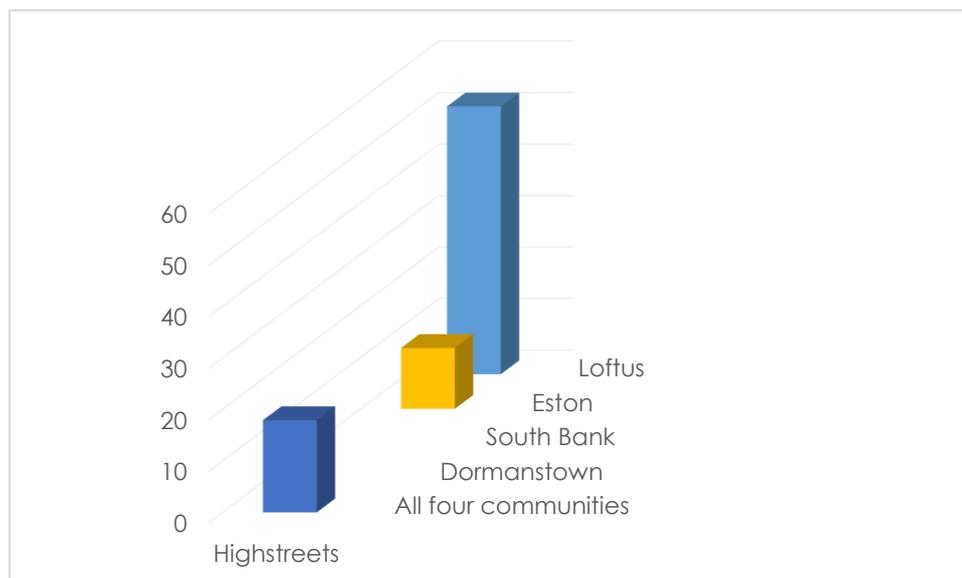


Figure 10, high street, by area and percentage

***'The future in Loftus looks bleak, there are so many empty shop fronts. We need more local shops that bring the community to the high street'.***

***I used to be able to do all my shopping in Loftus, but I can't now, we don't even have a bank'.***

***'Loftus has changed a lot, the high street is so rough, I don't tell people I live in Loftus; its dead here'.***

## Summary

---

Throughout the conversations we held in four communities in Redcar and Cleveland it was clear that the level of detail about people's lives, and their pride and hopes for their areas cannot be captured through traditional polling techniques.

Maintaining this level of communication and conversation with communities would hugely benefit local decision makers, especially when looking at hyper local priorities. The local authority level list of priorities paints a different and less detailed picture than those at community level.

When people talk about their local community they do so with a pride and passion that should be encouraged and nurtured.

We hope to be back in Redcar and Cleveland soon to visit the communities again to continue our conversation.

## Author

Stephanie Riches, People's Powerhouse Coordinator