The Hamlet Approach

Written by Jules Procter. June 2025

Introduction

Up to now, groups such the Oxford-based Low Carbon Hub, have been the leaders in our moves to tackle the climate emergency.

However, as we move from the early-adopter stage, to the widespread deployment of solutions, I think we need to change our approach. Up to now, understandably, the low-hanging-fruit solutions have been implemented. But to have significant affect on the world we live in, solutions need to include viable options for hamlets, and small villages, as well as for towns and cities.

This will be a tricky, but worthwhile, change in how we think about acceptable solutions. When we produce systems which make economic sense for a hamlet, often they will also be viable for a much large part of the population.

Obviously, there are some solutions which have to be at large scale.

So let's look at some areas we can tackle, using The Hamlet Approach.

Homes

For existing homes, generate enough electricity locally, and cheaply, to offset their inefficiencies. (Think of a thatched cottage, with cobb walls.)

Energy efficient, affordable new housing, probably modular, built in factories and transported to site and erected in under two days. Draft-proof, well insulated, underfloor heated. Heat pumps, solar panels (where appropriate) and with battery storage, and vehicle charging.

We will need shade trees for heat alleviation. This means that many houses may not be suitable for having solar panels fitted on their roofs. However, why not have solar panels covering the village cricket pitch (on movable battery storage systems)? Or cover a field with high-level panels, and grow crops underneath (agri-voltaics). We need to move away from solutions for just individuals to those for communities.

Water and Sewage

Greatly improved water handling, storage and use of electricity generation through small hydro systems, such as water mills (for generating electricity, not milling corn.)

Communal bio-digesters, for food waste. These already work well when six or more houses are involved. All other refuse to be put into a small number of large skips, for repair or re-purpose (either locally or at a nearby centre), or for recycling (at a larger facility, where there has been suitable investment to process the items properly).

Local sewage processing using the heat/pressure systems, as used at Worcester, to locally treat sewage. Greatly reduces the chance of spills, and overall, is a net producer of electricity. No more plastic nurdles in our water.

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Business and Transport

This local electricity generation and distribution, meets the needs of all the community, and doesn't rely on the National Grid.

With this availability of power and with fast internet connections, small business parks can be set up. So there is no need to commute large distances to offices, every day. However, occasional face-to-face should be encouraged with remote colleagues and customers .

Eco-tech “blacksmiths” will re-purpose or repair items, and 3D-print new pieces.

Sand batteries could supply high temperatures for light industrial needs, as well as communal electricity. Excess heat from AI computer server farms would heat the buildings.

Autonomous transport will be a major game-changer for hamlets. Being able to summon the right type of vehicle for your journey. A mini-bus for shopping or theatre trips, a van to deliver goods, a car to carry you and your colleagues to a meeting. And, a truck to take refuse skips away for processing.

Reduced transport on the roads, reduced wear and tear , reduced air pollution.

Food Production

With rainwater harvesting, for growing plants, and for flood control, suitable crops could also be grown in an aquaponic or hydroponic environment. This would greatly reduce the need for crop-growing land, and fertilizer.

There is a more “tech-savvy” approach to growing crops by some enlightened farmers, with the move to cover crops, and targeted spraying, replacing ploughing with large tractors.

Also, much of our meat protein will come from, town-orientated facilities, so we won't need to allocate any where as much land for raising herds of cattle and sheep.

Chickens could all be free-range.

These would be major, positive changes for agriculture and horticulture, and on how our landscape would look. More trees and woodland, more hedges and scrubland. More chance of the survival of animals and insects. Husbandry for the 21st century.

Information Sharing

At the local pub or village hall, community sharing of eco information. Do you have good practices to share? Are there areas you would like to improve upon? How well are we doing?

I think a focus on solutions for those in a rural setting would lead to a more inclusive society, and a better quality of life. Doing things in the right places.

Are you ready to live in a hamlet?