



Natural resources

The Earth's natural resources are used for every aspect of life. Water, cotton, wood, cement, aggregates, plastics, steel...the list goes on. But think about where these resources come from, the environmental impacts of producing, processing and transporting them, and how reliant they are on cheap oil.

Oil dependency

Any material that is highly dependent on cheap limitless supplies of crude oil is inherently unsustainable. Most materials that we use in every day life are very oil dependent (directly or indirectly), which leaves us in a vulnerable position that is dependent on financial, political and geographical variables across the world.

To break that dependency we must evaluate what materials are essential, work out if they can be produced locally and how dependent they are on oil. If materials we need are oil-dependent and from far away places, are there viable alternatives?

[Find out more](#) →

[Oil vulnerability](#)

Essentials of life

Food, water, shelter, clothing and warmth are bare essentials of life. It's therefore imperative that we re-design our society and landscape to ensure these needs can largely be met from resources within the local or regional area. There is no doubt that a country such as the UK, with its favourable temperate climate, *can* be self-sufficient in the essentials; the reason it's currently not are down to perverse economic and social reasons.

[Find out more](#) →

[Can the Britain feed itself?](#)

Embodied energy

All resources arrive at our doorstep with embodied or embedded energy – that is the full amount of energy that was used to produce that item. For example, a bar of steel has been mined from the ground as iron ore, processed through a blast furnace, turned in to steel, machined to size and transported. That's a very energy intensive process that relies on large quantities of fossil fuels, with consequent carbon emissions.

The embodied energy demands of each resource we use must be considered. Are there viable lower embodied energy alternatives, and how will this energy demand be met in a post - Peak Oil world?

[Find out more](#) →

[Embodied energy of materials](#)

Building materials

As little as one 100 years ago, all island buildings would have been made largely from local materials – granite, ram, sand, even thatch with just a few imported materials. Now granite is used as decoration and virtually all building materials are imported. Scilly may never be able to supply all its own building materials, but a reliance on aggregate, cement, plaster, paint, steel, glass, wood and much more is an unsustainable position to be in.

There is potential to use and reuse local resources more. Making a conscious decision to use low embodied energy, sustainably produced and British-made materials would be a good start to increasing resilience and reducing carbon emissions. A desire for quality over price and longevity in design would lead to a better legacy of housing stock and reduced demand for new stock in the future.

A limitless and cheap supply of building materials in the future cannot be taken for granted.

[Find out more](#) 

[Transition Totnes building group](#)

Clothing

Demand for cheap cotton clothing is seemingly insatiable. But, as with food, cheap at the checkout means hidden costs elsewhere – environmental or social, often in foreign countries. Non-organic cotton production is incredibly damaging to the environment and people where it's produced.

Other clothing fibres are also an option, such as hemp and wool – two things that Britain can produce a lot of (whilst we can't grow cotton). The first stage to reducing demand for damaging cotton is to support alternatives methods of production and crops.

[Find out more](#) 

[Pick your cotton carefully video](#)

[Benefits of hemp](#)

[Organic and Fairtrade clothing directory](#)

Biomass

Wood and fibrous crops can be used for a number of different uses, from heating to fencing, and are an element not consciously woven in to the modern landscape. This is a lost opportunity for future generations and something that must be part of sustainable landscape design in the future.

Willow, elm, pines, holly, buckthorn, alder and sweet chestnut all grow well here on Scilly and are have many varied uses. Whilst some broadleaf trees don't mature for over 50 years, quick growing species such as willow produce a usable crop in less than 10 years. The best time to plant a tree...is yesterday.

[Find out more](#) 

[Woodland Trust: British trees](#)

[The Man who planted trees](#)