



How many politicians does it take to change a lightbulb?



Volume 3 Number 2
ISSN 1745-8781

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New subscription rates

● UK non-members: £40 ● Members: £20
● Europe: £100 ● Elsewhere (air mail): £105. For subscription enquiries and BSRIA membership enquiries, contact BSRIA on 01344 465600, or visit the website www.bsria.co.uk

Years until mineral resources are exhausted		
Mineral	If the world consumes minerals at today's rate	If the world consumes minerals at half the US rate
Aluminium	1027	510
Antimony	30	13
Chromium	143	40
Copper	61	38
Gold	45	36
Indium	13	4
Lead	42	8
Nickel	90	57
Phosphorus	345	142
Platinum	360	42
Silver	29	9
Tantalum	116	20
Tin	40	17
Uranium	59	19
Zinc	46	34

Source: USGS. Minerals omitted where data is not available.

Cover feature

News special report

How many politicians does it take to change a lightbulb?

Richard Forster argues that the proposal to ban the GLS lamp in favour of compact fluorescents is misguided and ill-considered

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Andrew Eastwell



We now have the Energy White Paper together with planning changes that will allow nuclear power stations to be built quicker. That's carbon and security of energy supply sorted then.

Coming up on the rails however is an entirely new challenge that is going to shape a whole lot more of our thinking – and in double-quick time as well. If demand continues to grow, the world resource of many minerals will be consumed at a faster rate than shown in the table opposite. For

example, zinc will go in 20–30 years, platinum in 15 years, and lead in 20 years. If this was not enough, what minerals remain are predominantly in central Asia, South Africa and Australia with almost none of significance in Europe.

This means that recycling will be increasingly driven by economics. There are even plans to harvest roadside dust to recover platinum from exhaust catalysts. The *Energy Performance of Buildings Directive* looks like a breeze compared to this...

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