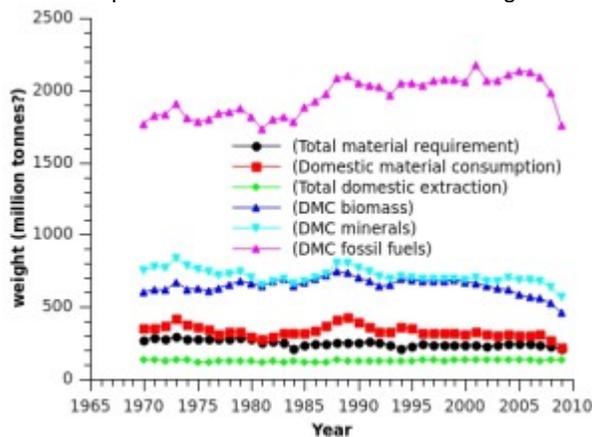


## Peak stuff?

Posted on February 10, 2016 by admin

As lent is almost open us it seems appropriate to write about "peak stuff". Have we in the west reached peak stuff? There have been some comments in the last few weeks from business people suggesting we might have reached "peak stuff", the point where people have had enough with consumerism, in the sense that we have enough and don't buy anymore. A businessmen recently said at a Guardian discussion day. *"In the West, we've probably hit peak stuff. We talk about peak oil. I'd say we've hit peak red meat, peak sugar, peak home furnishings."* There is no record of Jesus owning anything (something the health and wealth brigade ignore). However, since traditionally he was a carpenter (in actual fact this is one translation of his father's profession -earthly father's profession!) and didn't start his ministry until he was thirty(ish), logically he must have owned something. Be this at it may Jesus condemned excessive consumerism in both parables and comments to those he met. For example Mat 6v19; *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal."* Or the parables of the rich young ruler or the farmer who built the bigger barns, or the story of Lazarus... You get the idea. I personally don't think Jesus expects to live without any pleasure or comfort in our lives (there are other verses that suggest this), but certainly not to run after stuff and make it our god, which for many people in the West it has become. Or at least it has up until now? The question is has our demand for stuff peaked? We looked at this a bit in our [book](#) under green economics. The data plotted in the figure below at least in part is due to Chris Goodall a former green MEP and it is that we discussed in our book.



Domestic material consumption (DMC) is the weight of resources

used within the UK, including imports and excluding exports and total material consumption (TMR), the total weight of goods consumed in the UK plus all the resources used to produce them, domestically and overseas. The interesting thing is the trend and when it starts. Well before the financial crash. Of course the data is out of date and at least on cars has been surpassed. However even this is not necessarily a negative. People have been generally buying more fuel efficient vehicles, often smaller. This fits in with falling oil demand in the West. There is no doubt economic growth has slowed in the Western world. There are number of possible reasons for this being put forward. Firstly, developing economies develop and this raises growth. Second, inequality which rising everywhere *within* countries slows economic growth. Third, there is a theory that all the main innovations and inventions have been [made](#). Fourth there is the classical reason that economists use to explain weak growth, [weak demand](#). Lastly but one that rarely gets a [mention](#) since it contradicts current economic thinking is perhaps we don't want as much stuff. All the data suggests it doesn't beyond a certain point material goods don't make us any happier. Something that fits in with Christianity. Neil

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