

BUILDINGS: Tradespeople and Materials

If we want our buildings to be sustainable now and in the future, it is important to look at how they are built, maintained and renovated.

Trade professionals

There is a range of professionals employed in the process of constructing any building. These include:

Architect: A highly trained and skilled person who helps to plan, design and draw up building plans and checks that it is being built correctly.

Surveyor: A building surveyor has to make sure the building fits in with the Government's laws and regulations. A quantity surveyor manages the costs and makes sure the building is completed on time.

Builder: Builders and labourers build the house manually. They dig the foundations, lay the bricks and work with the roofer, plumber and electrician to make sure that the house is built correctly.

Roofer: A roofer makes sure that the roof is fitted properly so that rain and cold air cannot get in.

Plumber: Plumbers lay all the pipes and make sure that water comes into and leaves the building without any leaks.

Electrician: An electrician has to be careful to make sure all the cables, plugs, lights and switches are fitted in order to work safely.

Joiner and carpenter: They make, build and fit wooden fixtures such as floorboards, cabinets and staircases.

Painter and decorator: They decorate the building internally and externally once all the other work has been finished.

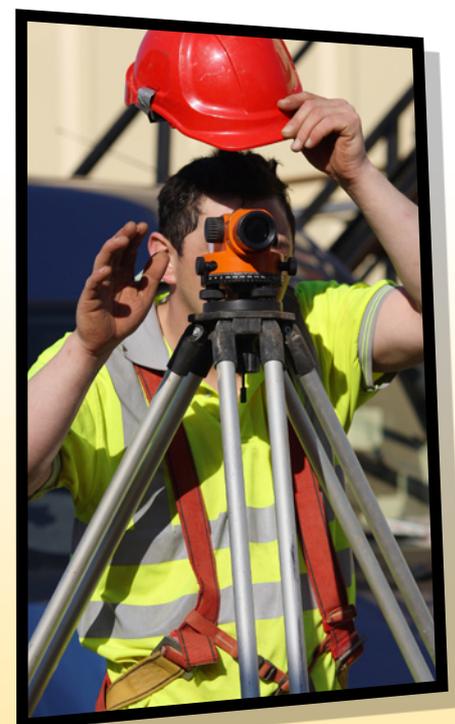
Professionalism

Many of the tradespeople listed above are members of professional bodies (such as the Institute of Chartered Surveyors and the Institute of Chartered Electrical Engineers). These bodies help to ensure that building work is completed to a high standard. It is important that tradespeople involved on a building project are qualified and are working to the highest standards.

Building

The type of material used to build something will be based on the type of building, the resources available, the budget and also the location.

It is important to remember that 'building' doesn't just mean building a new house or office but that it includes renovating (improving on something already in existence) and restoring (returning something to its former state before age or damage) older buildings or structures.



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Sources of material

In order to build in a sustainable way, materials should be ideally sourced locally and should not have a harmful effect on the environment. Certain things should be considered.

- Can the material be gathered locally and is it from a renewable source? Sourcing locally will cut down on transport costs, as well as help to support the local community by helping local producers and manufacturers. However, to be fully sustainable, the materials should also be 'renewable', so that sources will not run out, or can be easily replaced.
- Will these materials damage the environment? Ideally the materials should come from a renewable source.
- Will these materials damage the environment in the future - are they biodegradable and/or recyclable?

When looking for building materials, it is important to look for sustainable sources. Wood, for example, can be sourced from sustainable forests where, for each tree that is felled, others are planted in its place. The idea is that the forest will continue to grow, and provide materials and support to the local community, whilst damage to the forest and the environment is minimal.

Another example of a sustainable source is hay, which can be grown relatively quickly. Hay can be used for instance in wall insulation, to help with heating and noise.

Materials can also be reclaimed from older buildings that are being demolished. Also, the local tip, recycling centre or even the local park or beach can be a great way to find cheap environmentally friendly materials.



Did you know?

Some older building methods (such as hay for insulation or wattle and daub, using mud and stone for walls) can be more sustainable than new methods.

