Safe as houses (upper key stage 2/lower key stage 3)

What the photos say
The concept of sustainability is central to the ‘Vanishing points’ theme, and these photos of the Maldives; an ice arch, Lago Grey, Torres del Paine, Chile; flooding in St Mark’s Square, Venice; and cliff erosion at Happisburgh, UK, all highlight the interdependence between the physical and human world, showing geography as a dynamic subject of great relevance to today’s world.

The main photo used is the Maldives, although the other three are included in the ‘activation’ activity.

Lesson idea
This activity opens the children’s eyes to the fragility of the world and to the ways that places are connected either through physical means (changes in global sea levels) or through common issues (communities under threat). The activity is designed to take between 45 minutes and an hour.

Other resources
- sets of the four photos
- matching descriptions for the photographs (plus six other photos)
- access to computers, IWB
- extracts from reports that the President of the Maldives, Mohamed Nasheed, is searching for a new home for his people (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/7719501.stm)
- background information on the issue of sea level rise and its impact on the area.

Suggested activities
Activation
1 Pupils work in small groups, each with a set of the four photos. They begin by dividing the photos into two distinct groups and justify the groups with geographical reasoning. Feedback to class.
2 Pupils work out the common link between the photographs. Snowball into bigger groups and come to a final class decision.
3 Discuss how the places photographed are all affected by climate change and sea level rise.
Main activity
1. Give each pupil ten cards each describing a different locality. Ask them to match the correct four descriptions to the photos used in the activation.
2. Select the Maldives card and display the large photo to the class on IWB or equivalent. Pupils describe verbally what they can see. Annotate the photo using good geographical vocabulary (sea, island, houses, harbour, coral reef, etc).
3. Read an extract from Mohamed Nasheed’s speech about the threat of sea level rise (http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/nov/10/maldives-climate-change) and the possibility that his people will need to look for a new home.
4. In groups, and beginning the task from given information, ask pupils to list either the advantages, or the disadvantages, of moving the population of the Maldives to another location.

Plenary
Set the scene for the next session where pupils will further their research using the internet and will then prepare to debate the point from their group’s standpoint.

Curriculum opportunities
**Global dimension:** An understanding of the interconnectivity of the world and its systems.
**Sustainable development:** Understanding that communities around the globe are often faced with the same or similar issues and that we all share responsibility.
**Community cohesion:** Pupils become aware of the importance of community decision making.
**Personal learning and thinking skills:** Thinking collaboratively through an important issue, weighing up the pros and cons and making decisions.
**Opportunity for problem solving:** to design flood-resistant buildings as an alternative to moving away.

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