Winter fuel allowance (lower key stage 4)

What the photo says
Energy is a basic need. As the desert sun sets, and the temperature drops, firewood provides warmth, the means to prepare food, and an opportunity for companionship. Or is this a stereotypical viewpoint?

Other obvious questions relate to thinking about futures: how long would this type of fuel source survive exploitation (sustainability)? What alternative energy sources would be appropriate in this environment? You could also use this photo, taken in the Ténéré Desert, Niger, to explore climate change/desertification/development of other desert areas such as Dubai.

Another possible deception, of course, is that beneath the desert sands may lie huge oil reserves.

Lesson idea
Context: Extreme environments. The new GCSE OCR ‘A’ specification includes a section on desert environments.

Other resources
- additional images of desert landscapes
- information sheet on solar power
- access to Google Earth/mapping to geo-locate the image
- your school may have copies of David Waugh’s *Interactions*, which has a chapter on desert environments
- suitable video material is ‘Planet Earth’ and Ray Mears/Bear Grylls documentaries looking at the extreme nature of the environment and how humans have adapted to survive in them.

Suggested activities
Image interpretation
Ask the students to come up with five questions they would like the answers to when looking at the image. Suggestions could include:
- where is ‘he’ going?
- where did the wood come from?
- what is it going to be used for?
- what would be the most appropriate energy source in this environment?
- what is geographically *significant* about this image?
**Image frames**
The photograph could also be placed at the centre of one of Diane Swift’s image ‘frames’ ([http://www.geography.org.uk/download/GA_ADVWinterFuelAllowanceFrame.doc](http://www.geography.org.uk/download/GA_ADVWinterFuelAllowanceFrame.doc))

**Most likely to ...**
Produce a series of pairs such as ‘camel or 4x4’ for the person’s vehicle – discuss student responses to these.

**Plenary**
Finally, show an image of a pensioner sitting next to a fire in the UK. Ask the students to compare the image with the starter. Who has the biggest ‘energy problem’, and why?

**Curriculum opportunities**

**Global dimension:** connections between locations local and global/climate change/contrasts with Dubai.

**Sustainable development:**
- how sustainable is the gathering of wood for fuel in this way?
- what problems would be involved in replacing the wood used on a daily basis?
- could any other forms of energy be harnessed?
- which renewable energy sources are appropriate in this environment?

**Personal learning and thinking skills:** this image would be an opportunity to use the image frame developed by Di Swift, and consider emotional involvement.

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