



Today's May plenary session of the Consell de Formentera brought cross-party backing for a motion defended by mobility chief Rafael González urging "sustainability and maritime safety on the regular Formentera-Eivissa line". The councillor insisted the proposal was "of vital importance" with short- and medium-term objectives. Features of the proposed agreement:

1. "To urge the Port Authority of the Balearic Islands to guarantee safety in La Savina harbour by limiting simultaneous navigational manoeuvres to a maximum of two and respecting a June 2020 agreement to reduce trips on the Formentera-Eivissa ferry line". As in 2020, councillors hope to avoid a repeat of the situation in 2019, when 194 ferries shuttled back and forth between Eivissa and Formentera per day, with up to four departures at a time. González insisted such activity placed strain on the nearby ecosystem, including ses Salines nature reserve, not to mention the associated wasted resources and safety issues.
2. Secondly, councillors urged the Directorate General of the Merchant Navy, part of the Ministry of Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda, "to revoke and nullify technical arrangements permitting individuals to skirt regulatory precepts which are designed to maintain quality, safe navigation on the regular Formentera-Eivissa line".
3. Thirdly, councillors called on the Balearic government urgently adopt a decree to implement 2010 legislation regulating regional maritime transport. The move would require shipping companies on the Formentera-Eivissa line to maintain daily, year-round operations, guaranteeing consensus with Formentera's government and social and economic stakeholders by incorporating parts of the June 2020 agreement calling for reduced service on the Formentera-Eivissa line. González traced the continued failure to bring order to the local harbour to "eleven years of inaction on the part of the regional government". "This is our chance to give residents a say in how ferry passages are regulated and what kind of future they envision for the island's only port of entry and exit", said González.

Safer island

Local premiere and tourism chief Alejandra Ferrer defended a proposal for "a safer island for visitors and residents". She highlighted "progress in the local and worldwide vaccination efforts", but asserted that "diagnostic tests still can't be dispensed of". In due form, assembly members

came together to support a proposal linked to the Balearic government's so-called Safe Tourism Package. Similar to Formentera's Tourism Revival Plan, the proposed measures seek to guarantee safe workplaces by encouraging employers to submit staff to regular PCR or antigen tests.

Councillors unanimously agreed to ask the Balearic government to work with the island councils to incentivise employer buy-in for the planned measures and underwrite the plan's success by ensuring it can be adapted to the local on-the-ground reality of each island.

Covid-19 help

A united front of support also materialised behind a range of tax relief measures designed to address economic and social fallout from Covid-19 from 1 July to 31 December 2021.

Councillors agreed to not only halve fees associated with the Escoles d'Estiu, Escoles, Escola de Música and municipal sports facilities and sports activities, but remove them altogether in the case of services during the same period at the municipal abattoir.

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Eligible candidates include freelancers whose business has been affected by covid-19, the unemployed, workers on furlough or individuals who are eligible to receive welfare benefits. Finance and tax office chief Bartomeu Escandell asserted that the latest six-month extension of the subsidies was "still fundamental for crisis-hit islanders". "They really need this, and they're our number-one priority", he affirmed.

Farmers' co-op and fishing

Plenary attendees unanimously adopted the proposed terms of a partnership with the local agrarian collective. Primary sector chief Josep Marí pointed out that the vote would also open up funding to the tune of €130,000 — a boon for the public programme to revive Formentera agriculture and implement rural and scenic improvements.

Parties with plenary representation came together to table and deliver backing to a proposed revision of shellfish fishing restrictions based on European Council regulation 2021/19.

Decision-makers pressed Madrid to revisit EU commitments and establish specific fishing measures based on scientific reports in each territory, taking into account the reality of the fishing sector in the Balearic Islands and, in particular, on Formentera. Plenary members additionally urged the regional ministry of agriculture and fishing to continue recalibrating its own commitments with the EU and to share the revised arrangements with the central government.

Limited access: es Cap

The GXF-PSOE cabinet overcame Sa Unió opposition to limit vehicle access to sa Tanca d'Allà Dins from 1 June to 15 October. From Tuesday, a barrier at kilometre 6.5 will prevent drivers of motor vehicles, cars and motorbikes from reaching the lighthouse by way of the north-south highway. Mobility chief Rafael González insisted the site would remain accessible for individuals with reduced mobility and recalled the high-season overcrowding that gave way to the idea of regulation in 2017. González said restricted access would continue, describing the initiative as “well received by visitors and residents alike” and asserting, “It’s solved the problems we had”. A car park near the barrier accommodates 60 cars and 100 scooters, so visitors can leave their vehicle and proceed to the lighthouse on foot or bicycle.

Other proposals

Passing with GxP-PSOE cabinet support despite abstention from the opposition was the launch of an official review based on the rulings handed down in PO 87/2014, a case brought by SUNWAY SL concerning an urban planning licence awarded to MORSANIX SL.

The assembly brought approval for two Sa Unió proposals too. The first involved the execution of projects approved in the participatory spending initiatives of 2017 and 2018 which have not yet been implemented. The second will mean the suspension from 2022 of formentera.eco registration requirements for islanders who pay the mechanical traction vehicle tax.

Department report

Economy, finance and general services chief Bartomeu Escandell spoke to efforts undertaken in the departments under his responsibility, part of the backbone of the administration’s activity. As the councillor put it, “it’s been a complicated year and the budgets had to be reworked so support could be delivered to islanders and businesses”. “If Formentera’s economic and financial solvency count for anything, they mean we can cope with pandemic fallout and help our people through tough times”, said Escandell, “and all that without interruptions to normal government operations and services”. In that sense, Escandell praised staff for seamlessly adapting to remote working and the current situation so that the day-to-day affairs of the Consell could continue unhindered. Lastly, Escandell promised plenary participants that “in my

departments, we're constantly working for quality tourism that is respectful of the land and ensures Formentera's survival as a tourist destination known for its natural environment and high quality of life".

Official proclamation against LGTBI-phobia

Cross-party support also materialised behind a proclamation from Vanessa Parellada in commemoration of International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. "This is also about condemning discrimination suffered by all people with sexual orientations and gender expressions and identities that diverge from what's seen as 'normal'", insisted the councillor of equality and LGTBIQ+ affairs.

Parellada touted local government's commitment to awareness-building and training, as well as the launch of the Comprehensive Care Service (Servei d'Atenció Integral, SAI). Assembly members agreed that work in such areas must continue, and called on the Balearic government to promote and coordinate LGTBI public policies and fulfil their duties as keepers of the cause. They called on Madrid to continue working to pass legislation for equal treatment and the LGTBIQ+ collective and legislation for the real and effective equality of trans people.

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**Communications Department
Council of Formentera**