



Earlier today the Formentera Council convened its June plenary session. Members unanimously passed a proposal to urge the regional environment ministry in Palma to disqualify Spectrum's overdue environmental impact study on oil and gas exploration in the Balearic Sea. CiF environment councillor Daisee Aguilera explained that, if allowed to go ahead, the activity could take place “a mere 20 kilometres from the Pitiüsa Islands and cover an area of 14,000 square metres”. The Council has requested the project be cancelled. Explaining the Council's stance, Aguilera cited the fact the completed study came due April 20 and the Govern Balear Ministry of Environment's extension on the deadline came a month and a half late.

Plenary members also voted unanimously to pass a joint proposal encouraging “respect and visibility for sexual and gender diversity”. Social welfare councillor Vanessa Parellada thanked all the political groups for backing the proposal, which she described as a way to “show support for the law guaranteeing legal protection for lesbian, gay, transexual, bisexual and intersex individuals, wipe out sex- and gender-based fears and assert the Council's commitment to LGBTBI groups.” On that note, it was announced that on June 28, the Council would raise a rainbow pride flag in celebration of World Pride Day.

Excepting a “no” vote from Partido Popular, the day's plenary session brought unanimous approval for a bid to change the official form of address for council members from *honorable* to *senyor*

(sir) or

*senyora*

(madam), a measure aimed at decreasing the divide between elected officials and locals.

Unanimous go-ahead was also given to a proposal to draft an official declaration celebrating June 14, national Spanish sign language day.

### Report

The vice-president and councillor of the president's office, the tax office and the office of rural affairs, Bartomeu Escandell, addressed plenary members today. Speaking about work in the president's office, Escandell highlighted recent work with the CiF chair to organise and coordinate government and administration operations. “One of the Council's top priorities,” he declared, “is to ensure unity and cohesion in a group of such varied political backgrounds”.

By contrast, Escandell identified the tax office as the “CiF division with the fewest changes under foot”. He claimed a responsible management was behind the success of the Council's budget stabilising efforts. According to the councillor, the yearly budget stands at roughly 22 million euros and the Council is able to earmark money for re-investment, something he called “fundamental for a place like Formentera that lives off of tourism”.

### **Ca ses Castellones**

Councillor Escandell shared his concern over the “economic impact of a judge's ruling on the Ca ses Castellones case requiring the CiF to pay 1.5m euros”. Aside from financial considerations, the councillor had a broader critique to make, for society in general and local politicians in particular. He called the present case “a clear example of the pitfalls of rash decision making” and recalled the chain of events between 2003 and 2005 that saw the PP—with backing from GUIF and PREF—sidestep construction restrictions at the site and sign a building permit just one week before the project faced review. The upshot, he explained, is that the Council has been asked to pick up what started out as a 5m euro tab. Susana Labrador, spokesperson for Gent per Formentera, called on the PP to “assume political responsibility for the repercussions of the ruling”.

### **Rural affairs**

Councillor Escandell also took time to speak about the Farmland Reserve project. He described the goal as going beyond “winning back the image of an actively farmed countryside” and extending to “enhancing crop yield”. To the second point, he said locally-grown products were necessary for providing cheap options for livestock feed and “turning over fine-dining calibre products that we can be proud of”.

On agriculture, Escandell highlighted the importance of a recent announcement from the Govern Balear's chair Mateu Ginard that plans for the local irrigation pond have been set for next summer.

In terms of fishing, the councillor called “stepping up monitoring operations along our coasts” his personal crusade.

### **Safety**

Escandell stated his own pledge: “To make our beaches, coastline and island safe.” To do so, Escandell referred to the Council's 37 person-strong team which works with other forces behind the exclusive task of ensuring order and safety.

In terms of firefighting, Escandell reported on the addition of one professional fireman to the island's brigade, which is made up of four professionals and two volunteers. He also hailed “the speed and professionalism of our firefighters' response to a string of vehicle arson incidents this winter”. The councillor said those fires are still under investigation.