

Earlier today local decision-makers gathered in the plenary hall of the adult day care facility for the first session of discussion on the state of the island. Consell de Formentera chief Alejandra Ferrer opened the estat de Formentera with her reflections on the current state of local affairs, a stock-taking of efforts within government and a picture of the road ahead.

Ferrer began by underlining the day's focus on covid-19 incidence and a crisis of two dimensions: "in public health, where efforts continue to centre on keeping islanders safe, and in the economy, a consequence of the first".

Start of summer

Ferrer spoke of challenges in planning and the imperatives of Covid-19 constraints in constant flux, and underscored a plan "to reactivate and turbocharge tourism" — part of a strategy that was hatched with input from Formentera's business community and local political party reps and tailored to respond to "the full array of potential outcomes". The work has sought to guarantee a "safe-as-possible destination in summer 2021", and in that regard, President Ferrer shed light on public health safeguards and steps to foster awareness.

Economic crisis

Ferrer turned next to the economy and the local plan to reactivate tourism, which, she pointed out, preserves elements of the 2021 Tourism Promotion Plan, "like Formentera's tack courting tourists and our vision for tourism, and offers an analysis of weaknesses and opportunities". "As always, we're leading with sustainability, sustainable mobility, rural renewal and safeguards on culture and local heritage", said Ferrer, "and striving for social equilibrium, economic improvement and environmental protections".

And the president outlined several bids this winter to reinvigorate local commerce. Permits have gone out and the summer season has begun for vendors at artisan markets and other streetside operations and the Formentera Department of Commerce is currently crafting its own plan to boost commercial activity.

Economic assistance
On the struggling economy, President Ferrer highlighted ongoing work to “adapt, expand and extend the validity of new economic and fiscal measures aimed at tackling economic and social fallout from the Covid-19 public health crisis”. Businesses and political parties played key roles preparing and agreeing the response and ensuring no islander was left behind. Local government extended its own aid through winter, with additional extensions expected to keep assistance going through summer and perhaps as late as year’s end. Help for businesses, families and renters, meanwhile, has been complemented by increasingly inclusive national and regional assistance.

On support for the most vulnerable, Alejandra Ferrer drew attention to the pandemic-era efforts of the Formentera Department of Social Welfare. She pointed up the department’s processing of applications for the special Covid-19 Guaranteed Social Income and Minimum Employment Income over the past 12 months, describing the bottom line as “guaranteeing islanders’ right to basic social support”.

Ferrer made assurances that the administration’s commitment to equality, LGTBI communities, women, education, youth, sport and culture would not be impacted by the coronavirus crisis. “Extraordinary effort has gone into making sure services and programming continue uninterrupted”, she asserted.

The president spoke about an array of initiatives to defend cultural heritage, including the Consell’s research grant. This year, that endowment grew to €8,500, and 25 grants were announced to rehabilitate local cultural heritage sites.

Agriculture
Ferrer touted continued support for the local agrarian co-operative, which claims more than 400 members, and the Farmland Reserve programme, which now encompasses 270 hectares of cropland. “New services will lay the groundwork for an oil mill, collective workspace and additional displays of a newly enhanced local production capacity”, said Ferrer, “while infrastructure improvements, like at the local fishermen’s guild, will help guarantee fresh fish for islanders and visitors”.

Renewable energy
A range of actions in recent years have sought gains for conservation and the environment while working to mitigate tourism’s direct and indirect impact on nature and on the quality of life

of residents. In a new initiative, the island will be party to an EU-backed pilot project for renewable energy. Ferrer also talked about the island's new waste management contract, expected to be through tender and in effect by late 2021. The president highlighted features like expanded organics pickup, more frequent collection and new containers and machinery. "The changes will help us tailor collection, cleaning and recycling to our reality today", she declared.

Hometown appeals

Ferrer pledged unwavering commitment to "regulating anchorage along the entire coast of Formentera and safeguards on land and at sea in ses Salines reserve".

"Another critical project involves regulating watercraft moorage at Estany des Peix, giving structure and sense to an iconic space of tremendous ecological importance. Work is afoot to put the project out to tender and shape the terms of regulated mooring in the area to strike a balance between enjoyment and legislation", she said.

Housing

Ferrer also touted collaborative efforts "to achieve ecological, socio-cultural and economic sustainability", adding, "Sustainability is also about guaranteeing people's basic rights, and paramount among them is access to decent housing — one of the most complicated challenges we face and one that distinct levels of government must unite in order to tackle".

Works

The president also reviewed works carried out this winter. "The new school in Sant Ferran, for example, will be ready by September", she said. Building work is likewise complete on the old persons' home, with efforts currently under way to tender out furnishings, adopt regulations and, in short order, build an access road to the facility. Work on the children's play area in Sant Ferran and the skate park is also nearing completion. Crews in the port and at the fishermen's guild have moved onto the next phase of upgrades, and announced completion of phase two of upgrades in es Pujols.

Sustainable mobility

Ferrer said sustainability was as important on land as at sea, and hightlighted the notable example of formentera.eco, which this year turns three. Other efforts have focused on slowing the arrival of vehicles on the island, limiting access to Finca d'Allà Dins in es Cap and, this year, reinstating controlled entry to ses Illetes.

In another mobility initiative, Ferrer pledged “continued work on compliance with the local mobility plan through public transport improvements, implementation of the new contract with more lines and more sustainable, bespoke buses for riders with reduced mobility”.

Priorities

The president concluded with the assertion that “the priorities are clear. We’ve achieved a lot, delivered on important projects and historical demands, and now it’s time to lean into our own vision for the island. Above all, it’s a vision underpinned by people and their quality of life. Tourism, our main industry, must also serve to stimulate other economies (craftwork, agriculture, fishing, livestock). We want a respectful tourism, which is ultimately the means to guarantee islanders’ quality of life and see to it that it’s a lifestyle and economic situation that will last over time”.

11 June 2021
Communications Department
Consell de Formentera