Today the Consell de Formentera celebrated its October plenary assembly, where backing was secured for a cross-party proposal to amend the General Coastal Regulation (*Reglament General de Costes, RGC*
) and file a contentious administrative appeal. In response to comments received during the public consultation in November 2021, councillors also agreed to urge the state government to modify the RGC wording in force since the publication of Royal Decree 668/2022 (1 August) and eliminate the changes liable to increase arbitrary boundaries and arbitrariness in the granting of administrative concessions in the public domain.

Likewise, councillors urged Madrid to suspend any measures that restrict rights in application of new regulations following the RGC reform until such time as provisions of the previous point are implemented. Councillors also asked the central government to reform the current legislation on coasts (Law 22/1988), which reconciles protections for maritime and terrestrial public domain with the established rights of occupants and acknowledgment of the ethnological, cultural and historical value of settlements and traditional coastal elements in order to grant them protection. Finally, local decision-makers urged the Consell de Formentera to file a contentious administrative appeal to reverse changes to the RGC to defend the rights of those it affects.

Budget modification

Overcoming the abstention of opposition group Sa Unió, cabinet councillors from Gent per Formentera and PSOE handed initial approval to a €2.25 million budget amendment to pay for new waste facilities shared with Eivissa at Ca na Putxa (€500,000), increased maintenance work on roads (€ 670,000), payments of the remodel of Carrer de s'Espalmador in Es Pujols (€170,000) and the access road to the old people's home (€90,000) and rising electricity and gas prices (€125,000), among others. Bartomeu Escandell, councillor of finance, said the modification would "align the budget with the reality of the economic crisis, as well as with plans for new facilities". In this sense, he stressed that the budget amendment draws on local government's surplus and that the Consell de Formentera debt holds steady at zero.

Public transport

Assembly members voted unanimously to urge the state government to fully subsidise seasonal and multi-journey tickets for bus transport on the island from 1 September to 31 December, including any potential extensions, possibly the whole of 2023. Rafael González, councillor of mobility, explained that currently the central government pays for half of local bus transport, with

the Consell de Formentera paying 20% for non-residents and the remaining 50% for residents. "Just as Madrid subsidises 100% of rail transport on Mallorca, we ask that they help to mitigate rising costs of living and enhance sustainable mobility locally by fully subsidising the type of public transport we have here on Formentera", said Rafael González.

Local autonomy in the Archives Act

Plenary members united once again to defend Formentera's local autonomy and challenge Articles 35 and 39 of Law 6/2022, of 5 August, on the administration of archives and records in the Balearic Islands. Councillor Guasch defended the proposal and pointed out that "the archives act passed in Parliament fails to recognise our island's autonomy, which is enshrined in both the Constitution and Estatut d'Autonomia, and jeopardises our authority in matters related to our documentary heritage". She asserted that the legislation conflates the powers of the Formentera Archive and the Historical Archive of Eivissa and Formentera.

Hence, councillors voted to request an opinion from the Consultative Council of the Balearic Islands on this matter and, if no resolution is forthcoming, to raise the issue before the Constitutional Court. Finally, as Guasch pointed out: "We cannot mortgage the future of the Formentera Archive".

Request for regional deduction

GxF-PSOE cabinet members and councillors of the opposition agreed to urge the Balearic government to take the necessary steps so that students from Formentera, Eivissa and Menorca who travel to pursue higher education are eligible for the regional deduction provided for in Article 4 of Legislative Decree 1/2014. "Formentera has a long tradition of students leaving the island, and often the Balearics altogether, to study. Hence, we ask that this regional deduction apply to Formentera students who meet the financial requirements, even if they study in other regions of Spain or countries of the European Union and regardless of whether an equivalent educational programme exists in the Balearic Islands", said Susana Labrador, councillor of education.

The councillor underlined the absence of in-person higher education programmes on the island and requested that educational grants and financial aid from the regional and central governments, such as the personal income tax deduction, should "take into account the particularities of our island, the triple insularity and the extra costs that this means for students and families from Formentera", an issue already raised in previous measures of the Consell de Formentera. Finally, Labrador stressed that educational aid to families is a priority for local government and, despite lacking the relevant authority, the Consell de Formentera offers assistance every year to offset an often twice compounded insularity for students studying off

the island, as well as higher education grants for students from Formentera.

Regulating at-home assistance

Assembly members also handed initial backing to regulations for the provision of at-home assistance. Rafael Ramírez, councillor of social welfare, described the rules governing Consell-backed at-home assistance as "comprehensive" and asserted they would lay the groundwork for an agreement between the Office of Social Affairs, Office of Sport and Consell de Formentera to manage at-home assistance for dependent individuals.

Senator

Assembly members also approved a proposal presented by Sa Unió that urges the Congress of Deputies to urgently legislate the bill approved by the Balearic parliament so that Formentera can have its own senator in the Upper Chamber during the next legislature.

Department report from Rafael González

Today Rafael González, councillor of mobility and territory, offered the assembly an account of efforts in the departments he manages. One of the most important initiatives of the mobility office is the formentera.eco project to regulate vehicles brought and driven on the island. The councillor said the initiative, now in its fourth year, has brought "positive and tangible results showing that the regulation works". González also drew attention to decreases recorded this summer by the Balearic Port Authority: an 8.5% drop in traffic compared to 2017's historic high, and 3.2% fewer in- and outbound vehicles at the port of La Savina compared to the same figures last August. He added that fewer vehicles and less traffic had also opened up room for more sustainable modes of transport such as cycling and public transport. He asserted that the main challenge in mobility was the bidding process for the new public transport concession to be overseen this winter.

As for the Office of Territory, the councillor highlighted definitive approval for modification four of the Insular Territorial Plan. The change means land can be made available for a new subsidised housing development in Sant Ferran, and to regulate and facilitate the installation of solar panels for self-consumption by local homes. Two additional modifications under way will make it possible to "align Formentera with the Balearic Agrarian Act and secure public land in Es Ca Marí for the pumping station of the future sewage network". As for licenses and permits, Councillor González underscored "efforts and changes aimed at increasing our office's processing capacity, which is up from the start of the legislature". Finally, the councillor applauded the great work done by workers in his offices.

Official proclamation

Lastly, assembly members passed an official proclamation on International Day for Trans* Depathologisation*. "Today we recognise more than just the experience and gender identity of trans* people; we recognise the need to secure their basic human rights", said Ana Juan, president and councillor of equality, who stressed: "No more stigmatising...public institutions are acting to support the realities of trans* individuals and to do away with barriers which people diverging from the imposed norm still encounter today".

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