Formentera's councillor of the environment and new technologies Silvia Tur and head of tech services Jaume Zaragoza met last Friday with local Telefónica representatives to evaluate the safety measures put in place last summer to protect the underwater telecom cable connecting Eivissa and Formentera. The representatives also discussed another important issue: progress being made with the implementation of 4G technology on the smaller Pitiüsa island.

Participants at the meeting praised “a summer without service interruptions on the island”. According to Councillor Tur: “This was in good part thanks to controls agreed upon in May 2014 by the Govern Balear, the Formentera Council, the Sant Josep Council and Telefónica to protect the fibre optic cable at Cala Jondal and Cala Saona”.

Tur explained how the success of these controls until present had been the motivation behind the Formentera Council's desire “to keep them in place”. For their part, Telefónica representatives committed to maintenance of the equipment currently installed on Formentera that is devised as a back-up in the event that sea-level protections fail.

Nearly two years ago, on 16 June and 30 July 2013, Internet and telephone service was temporarily lost across the entire island after a submarine cable linking Formentera with Eivissa was severed. Beyond a chilling effect on local tourism, the cuts effected interruptions to even the most basic services on Formentera, including emergency response, services of the hospital and local public administration, ATMs and travel agencies.

4G technology

Another issue discussed at the encounter was the arrival of 4G technology on the island. Silvia Tur indicated that the representatives from Telefónica had assured that “all the necessary equipment [was] already here on the island, and that for the time being its implementation [was] pending only the freeing up of radio waves. Due to a deferment of the already established deadline, these radio waves are currently set to be freed up – and subsequently made available to telephone service providers – in March”. The radio waves are currently occupied by television signal providers.