



Today in press conference, the councillor of environment of the Formentera Island Council, Silvia Tur, took the opportunity to outline the administration's stance on plans for petroleum exploration west of the Pitiüsa Islands on the Gulf of Valencia.

All the action up for consideration would entail serious impact on communities of marine flora and fauna existing on the Pitiüsa coastline. This is all the more true because most of the proposed action would take place within areas labeled – both by European directives on habitats and by the declaration on natural heritage sites – as protected or 'priority'.

For this reason the Formentera Council will propose an accord at its June plenary session with the intention of reaching consensus on adopting legal action to stop the petroleum prospecting. In February 2011, a proposal of accord was already unanimously adopted that voiced a rejection of this same prospecting. As of today no response has been given. Action related to the accord will be coordinated with the Eivissa Island Council, and contact has been maintained to this effect.

In December 2010, the petroleum prospection in question – proposed by the Capricorn Spain Limited company – obtained the authorisation of the Council of Ministries to investigate the existence of hydrocarbons in the Gulf of Valencia. The project has been carried out in two stages, the first of which has included seismic acquisition within an area of 4,296 km² in order to obtain 3D-mapping of the area and establish the geological structure of the ocean floor, going

as far down as 7,000 metres below sea level. The project's second phase consists in perforating the ocean floor at different points in an attempt to establish the existence of hydrocarbons.

The equipment used in seismic acquisition can produce acoustic emissions of up to 265 dB, which technical considerations indicate could strongly effect the different species of mammals and birds whose principle migratory routes pass through this area. Effects could also be noted on fields of *posidònia oceànica*.

Human beings can tolerate acoustic emissions of up to 120 dB, and crustaceans, for example, begin to suffer irreparable damage starting at 180 db. Included in this group are the *mular* dolphin, the *babau* tortoise (*caretta caretta*), other crustaceans found in the Mediterranean, and the endemic “pardela balear”, known locally as the *vivot*.

In the realisation of these perforations, mixtures of mud, minerals and chemicals are poured directly into the sea at the area of study and disseminated throughout the zone via ocean currents. This could imply an extremely grave effect on the species of wildlife that move about and feed in these areas.

Given that a portion of this activity is scheduled to begin within the year, and given the very real risks presented to Mediterranean marine ecosystems, not to mention to our island's tourist industry and to the tourist industry of the Pitiüses in general, the administration of Formentera wishes to manifest its rejection of these plans for petroleum prospection and its intention to take legal action to prevent them from occurring.