



Monday evening, 6 October, the multipurpose hall of the office of culture was host to a meeting of different territorial section representatives from the *Consell d'Entitats*. Twenty-five individuals attended, half as private citizens and the other half in their quality as representatives of member-associations within the Council's territorial section, and participated in an informational meeting regarding the insect known as the 'pine processionary caterpillar'.

Luis Núñez, head of the Govern Balear's Healthy Forests Service, acted as guest-speaker and sole Govern Balear representative present at the event. Representing the Formentera Council were Sílvia Tur, councillor of the environment, and Santiago Ferrer, councillor of agriculture.

Mr Núñez began his discourse by speaking about the legislation in application regarding forest protection: "Existing regulations are clear. Any preventative work must be just that: preventative." He continued by giving attendees some background of the pine processionary caterpillar in the Balearic Islands.

In Formentera, presence of the caterpillar, which further on in the life-cycle transforms into a butterfly quite unremarkable in colour, has been traced back to 2007, when it came in as a stowaway on a non-native stone pine planted in a private citizen's garden. Since then, reproduction of the caterpillar's larvae has remained too low to to alarm experts, except in an area of Es Cap de Barbaria where its growth has been exponential.

Núñez explained: "Due to a high concentration of females in a relatively small area [of Es Cap], males in that part of the island are extremely successful in their efforts to find mates and reproduce. This doesn't happen in other areas of the island because finding female partners elsewhere is more difficult."

The chief of the Balearic Healthy Forests Service described the problems often occasioned by the caterpillar; from devastating the green growth on pine trees to causing health problems in humans and in small animals like dogs. In humans, symptoms are generally only dangerous for individuals who have existing allergies, and are limited mostly to itchy eyes or other corporeal

itching.

Mr Núñez described the measures that exist to eradicate populations of the insect, which have until now been successful everywhere on the island except in the already-mentioned area of Es Cap de Barbaria. He explained his office's decision to fumigate an area of 300 hectares located in that part of the island, as well as the choice of a product found to be non-toxic for both humans and bees. The fumigation process will take place over two days and will occur before 17 November.

Plans for fumigation proved to be the most polemical segment of Núñez's presentation, with those Es Cap residents in attendance expressing their desire for more information and an assurance regarding the chemical composition of the product to be applied. Representatives from Obra Cultural Balear and GOB (the Balearic bird-watching society) insisted on the existence of non-toxic options that could be effective in reducing populations of the caterpillar, or, in the event that fumigation were absolutely necessary, the group contended that less-toxic alternatives were most certainly available.

Councillor Sílvia Tur reminded attendees that the measures being discussed were in any case sporadic, and assured that the Council would do its best to find alternate, on-the-ground solutions for treatment of the problem.