Presidential cabinet councillor Bartomeu Escandell and chief of the fire brigade (els Bombers de Formentera) Iván Marí stood before members of the press today to report on the brigade's work this year since January. As Escandell highlighted, the work of Formentera's local firefighters deserves all the more merit this year because «despite the unusually dry weather, we were able to avert any major fires». The councillor also extended his thanks to the Ibanat (Institut Balear de la Natura), local civil protection services, the Guárdia Civil and the Formentera local police, as well as the island's water transport companies for allowing the brigade to use their fleets at different times throughout the year.

Councillor Escandell reminded reporters of the Formentera Council's collaboration on wildfire risk awareness campaigns devised to teach the «little steps that people can take – not throwing cigarette butts out the window – to prevent tragedies from happening in our region». The Council also takes part in other outreach campaigns, explained Escandell, like one last year that expounded the importance of creating barriers to stop flames from spreading around houses that border Formentera's heavily-wooded areas.

A hectare of scorched land

For his part, brigade chief Marí reported that from the start of the year until 30 September his firefighters have been called into duty 102 times, five more than the same period last year. Of those incidents, 27 were fires. Seventeen of the fires were in areas of shrubbery or other vegetation – a common occurrence, he assured, during a year «made especially dangerous by the dry spell».

The brigade predicts this year nearly one hectare of land has been burned, with blazes in the majority of those incidents caused by still-lit cigarette ends. Marí called Formentera's recent rains «a welcome change», but asserted: «We need to remain vigilant. The wildfire risk on the island is always there».

Special vigilance in Es Ram area

Among the firefighters' different calls to duty this summer, especially harrowing was the trio of wildfires that swept through the same area of Es Ram in mid and late July. In consequence, the brigade coordinated regular passes through that part of the island throughout the summer,

splitting the work between the Bombers, Protecció Civil (civil protection services) and Ibanat crews.

Els Bombers de Formentera comprise four staff members: two full-time, one part-time and a fourth who is on-call. They have a fleet of vehicles which consists of a pickup truck and two fire engines – as Councillor Escandell notes, «the Council opted for rapid-response – and not especially large – vehicles in its goal for effective fire control». He reminded the audience at the press conference that, barring any changes, the official high-risk period of the summer season will end 15 October. Pursuant to the municipal code, after that date controlled fires will once again be permitted.