



As the Formentera Council convened its April plenary session today, two measures commanded particular prominence: a proposal to block acoustic surveys and initial support for an ordinance on metred parking.

Stopping MEDSALT-2

Thanks to backing from Gent per Formentera (GxF), PSOE and Compromís—and despite the abstention of PP representatives—traction was gained by a motion to immediately halt review of a push for acoustic surveys. The measure followed a decision by the Balearic Islands' parliament to support a ban on exploration, research and harvesting of hydrocarbons and similar substances in the Mediterranean.

The plan's outwardly scientific appearance notwithstanding, and despite the reticence of PP assembly members in acknowledging the petroleum industry's interests in seeing such a plan come to fruition, recent weeks have attended an array of warning bells sounded by the environmental community. Most recently, Aliança Mar Blava has claimed possession of evidence demonstrating actors within the petroleum industry have already shown interest in the project. Namely, the group points to the fact that the geological salt formations flagged for exploration are thought by some to be potential nodes of petroleum and gas.

Even more harmful, say detractors, are the acoustic disruptions airguns used in the survey process would produce. It is feared that such noise could be devastating for undersea animal life. Species considered most vulnerable are whales, sperm whales, dolphins and fish held to have commercial value.

Parking ordinances

With backing from GxF and PSOE, approval was also secured for two distinct plans—one concerning metred parking, and another laying the groundwork for the parking scheme's financing. The metred parking regime will be expanded from la Savina to the towns of es Pujols, Sant Francesc and Sant Ferran.

The project is part of a bid to meet burgeoning local demand for parking by promoting more frequent rotation and additional spaces.

Departmental reports

Concluding the day's session was a report from Bartomeu Escandell, CiF secretary of the president's office, the tax office and rural affairs, concerning his department's actions in recent years.

The secretary highlighted upgrades to the funding Formentera receives. In eleven years Formentera's financial package has swelled from €3 million to €6.8 million. Touting an increasingly sharp focus on local residents and online operations, Escandell also trumpeted what he called the Council's firm commitment to dynamism within the public administration.

As well, the secretary underscored efforts to revamp the legislative underpinnings of coordination between local law enforcement in the Balearics. Other similar gains have been netted in restoring local councils' leeway in hiring police officers, thus promoting the stability of local forces.

Escandell described such legislative tweaks as key to the Council's quest, now several years in the making, to fill vacancies, not to mention create altogether new positions, on the force. Council officials say that if everything goes according to plan, the new officers will be on the force in time for this year's high season. Escandell praised the work of the island's lifeguards, firefighters and the “tireless efforts” of Formentera's civil protection force—“volunteers who love Formentera”. “Thanks to these volunteers' close collaboration, we have been able to substantially improve our emergency response system”, he said.