



At 8.00pm yesterday, representatives of local entities and associations gathered for a meeting of the Formentera Consell d'Entitats (CdE) that was focused on taking stock of the 2021 results of formentera.eco, a scheme to regulate the number of vehicles brought and driven on the island, and reviewing a proposal to carry the project forward in 2022. At the end of the first session, CdE members received a copy of the proposal and were asked to share it with their respective associates. On Tuesday 18 January, the CdE will reconvene for a second session to gather member groups' feedback and vote on the proposal.

In light of restrictions stemming from tier 3 public health alert, participants were asked to join the gathering online. In-person attendees included Ana Juan, President of the Consell de Formentera; Rafael González, Councillor of Mobility, and Vanessa Parellada, Councillor of Citizen Participation, as well as the secretary of the gathering and the department specialist of the Formentera Office of Citizen Participation. Members of associations, political parties and the local cabinet were able to follow the event online. A total of twenty individuals logged in.

President Juan traced the scheme to count and cap vehicles brought and driven on Formentera to a popular request gathered by the CdE and to collaboration between local and regional government aimed at creating legislation for "a more sustainable brand of mobility for Formentera". In that connection, the President said it was in 2019, when formentera.eco first launched, that local legislators set the scheme's current goal of 16% fewer vehicles on the island, shrinking annually by 4% until reaching the desired total.

Today, despite the pandemic, "it is plain to see that regulation is necessary", Juan asserted. As for the first CdE session, Juan signalled it would "serve to take stock of regulation in summer 2020 and to explain the proposed fees and regulatory timeline which will come up for a vote in next week's session".

formentera.eco in 2021

The Councillor of Mobility reported on formentera.eco in 2021, during which time a daily limit of 20,591 vehicles was in effect. "Not once was that ceiling surpassed, which means that we made good on one of our regulatory goals", said González, "but the drop in vehicles failed to make a difference in islanders' sense of saturation on the road in August".

During the 24 days from 4 to 27 August, visiting motorists accounted for 90% of the allotted vehicle quota. And, for five days during the same month (14-16 and 19-20 August), the quota

was reached.

Summer 2021 data

Of particular note last season was visiting motorists' shorter-than-average stay of between three and four days. Moreover, 40% of bookings by visiting drivers were for just one day. Sensor and survey data additionally indicate another noteworthy feature: an increase in overall vehicle trips. While in 2019 the average visitor took two trips a day, in 2021 the daily average was 2.9.

Other 2019 and 2021 comparisons

Seventy percent more cyclists were observed on the island's network of nature trails (rutes verdes).

There was a 28% drop in individuals riding public buses.

Rides in taxis increased by 8%.

Daily traffic equalled that of 2019, when an 8% drop had been observed compared to 2017.

However, rush hour traffic was up 11%.

Based on the data, Councillor González concluded that "regulation has driven a significant increase in bicycle and taxi use, but with the pandemic, people don't feel as safe as they once did on buses, so ridership is down". The pandemic also meant shorter stays and an increase in daily visitor trips. By González's lights, "this caused crowding on roads and, according to islanders, the feeling that there was a large number of vehicles". In that regard, Gonzalez identified imperatives like "continuing to lower the vehicle ceiling", "dissuading visitors from coming just one day" and "stepping up controls".

formentera.eco in 2022

Consell d'Entitats members will review the following proposal:

Lower the 2019 ceiling by an additional 4%.

2020: - 4 %

2021: - 8 %

2022: - 12 %

2023: -16 % (legislative term target)

In 2022, the vehicle ceiling will be set at 19,696 – dropping under twenty thousand for the first time.

Discussion of regulatory timeline and fees

The CdE session included discussion of the 2022 calendar of regulatory enforcement and fees. Association representatives will consult with their associates and a vote will be taken next week at the second session.

Timeline:

Option 1: 15 June to 15 September.

Option 2: Last week in June to first week in September (as in 2021).

Fees:

Option 1: treble current fees (passenger cars: €3/day [minimum payment: €15]; motorcycles: €1.50/day [minimum payment: €7.50]).

Option 2: double current fees (passenger cars: €2/day [minimum payment: €10]; motorcycles: €1/day [minimum payment: €5]).

2022 bookings

The summer 2022 bookings website will come online in the second half of February. The current rate of €1/day for cars (minimum: €5) and €0.50/day for motorcycles and mopeds (minimum: €2.50) will be applied until a modified rate is adopted in April or May. Accreditation will be free for residents of Formentera and the Balearic Islands and individuals with electric vehicles.

Until the bookings website goes online, all accommodation and ferry reservations will guarantee accreditation for reservation holders.

Sustainable mobility

Councillor González described the end-game of formentera.eco as "achieving an island where

mobility is sustainable and where pedestrians, bicycles and riders of public transport enjoy increased prevalence to the detriment of private vehicles".

In 2022, €270,000 will be allocated to restore the public bus service to pre-pandemic levels and recover 28% of the riders lost in 2021. Likewise, the service will remain free of charge for residents and visitors under 18 and for residents and visitors with disabilities and their companions.

Councillor Gonzalez announced an agreement with the local chauffeurs' association that 49 taxis (25 ordinary and 24 seasonal permits) would provide summer service in 2022 and 2023 for a 29% increase relative to summer 2021, when 38 taxis (25 ordinary and 13 seasonal permits) were in circulation.

Other pre-season efforts will include encouraging pedestrians and cyclists to use the Camí des Brols path linking La Savina, Sant Francesc and Es Pujols and closing traffic to motor vehicles, except for area residents. In addition, residents will continue to receive assistance to purchase traditional and electric bicycles.

Reinforced controls and new information drives

Lastly, Councillor González highlighted plans to bolster control systems. The island currently has cameras in place in La Savina and a mobile camera. In 2022, cameras will be installed at the hospital roundabout; attendants will also monitor parked vehicles, and drivers of rental cars must display information about their rental contract when they park in La Savina.

Before regulatory enforcement resumes, to ensure that all motorists, whether island residents or not, possess the authorisation to drive and park their vehicles on local roads, in May the Consell will lead an educational push tailored for this purpose.

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