



Last night, the Council of Entities heard from two regional officials —Govern balear president Francina Armengol and minister of land, energy and mobility Marc Pons— on a proposal to regulate vehicles that enter the island. It was a gathering attended by a triad of officials from the local administration as well — President Jaume Ferrer and Councillors Sònia Cardona and Rafael González, of the departments of public participation and mobility.

Held in the plenary hall of Formentera's adult care centre, the gathering was attended by roughly twenty representatives of local island groups.

The event was a sounding board for the Govern's plan to move forward with a draft bill on sustainability in environmental measures and tourism on Formentera. One hallmark of the project is the legal scaffolding it would create to give the Formentera Council leeway in deciding when to keep vehicles from entering the island.

Said Ferrer: “The cap on vehicles is a project that emerged here in the Council of Entities and we are here today to inform [the group] that plans are on track to make it a reality”. One reason it is so important, Formentera's president asserted, is that “the administration's top priority is dealing with the subjects most important to islanders”. Measures to ensure peace and quiet and safeguards on natural spaces are “key to tourists' sustained enthusiasm for Formentera”.

Armengol, the Balearic chief, traced efforts to jumpstart the proposed bill to the start of the current legislative session, highlighting a wealth of public debate, across-the-board political support, and a “robust social component” as having paved the way to the present situation. She also underscored the contrast between “sky-high vehicle figures” and “a local passion for sustainability, a size which makes such a venture feasible and the infrastructure required to get it off the ground”.

Mr Pons situated the measure's implementation in 2019, “to make sure there's time to reinforce local public transport so that Formentera's visitors have the ability to get around”.

Draft legislation on environmental and tourism sustainability on Formentera

The Govern de les Illes Balears would lead the effort to create legislation ensuring the legal mechanisms for such a move. The Council, for its part, would administer on-the-ground application of that legislation.

Participants of last night's gathering, while stopping short of evaluating exactly which measures could be employed —expected to take place in 2018 as the bill itself is being pushed forward— they did highlight the legislation's focal points:

Limiting vehicle ingress and travel based on environmental criteria. Establishing a maximum number of rental vehicles. Promoting electric and clean-running vehicles in the public and private sectors. Conducting projects to guarantee increased environmental sustainability.

Inspections and fines to enforce the measures would also be set up.

As for determined seasonal restrictions on entry and circulation of motor vehicles, numerous exceptions —for residents, people with reduced mobility, public utilities, tractors and transport lorries— are envisioned.

The legislation would take effect in summer 2019.

Formentera's survey of local roads (available on the administration's website from February 9) compares two snapshots of congestion on the island: one taken in August 2017 and another from 2009. Councillor González called the results a “clear indication that the argument in favour of proposed measures is well-founded”.

How exactly the law's final provisions are defined will depend on the conclusions of the Council's mobility strategy, currently in development.