

Local government's e-celebration of Balearic Islands Day, including remarks from President Alejandra Ferrer, can be viewed from 10.00am on the Consell de Formentera YouTube channel .

The Consell has additionally put together a video tribute to the hometown dance troupes Es Xacoters and Es Pastorells, available to stream on YouTube .

One year shy of the *colles*' last public performance, the Consell offers up its own humble tribute —a virtual demo with dancers' explanations of how they've spent the twelve months of pandemic— in hopes the troupes will soon be dancing again.

President Ferrer's remarks can be found below.

BALEARIC ISLANDS DAY 2021
Alejandra Ferrer
President, Consell de Formentera

Bon dia and very special greetings as we celebrate Balearic Islands Day.

As with so much the last twelve months, this event must be held virtually — no gatherings in the square, no troupes dancing traditional ball pagès.

It's a year since our dancers last performed. A year during which a global pandemic has put our lives on hold and turned our world upside down.

Today, across the archipelago, we commemorate the entry in effect of the Balearic Islands' first Statute of Autonomy. The day was 1 March 1983. It was 1 March yet again when the Statute was updated in 2007, enabling creation of the Consell Insular de Formentera.

Formenterers had always advocated for the island's own municipal administration — to give voice to our needs and defend our rights. We wanted to enjoy the same essential services as our neighbours across the archipelago, and chart our island's course as we saw fit.

Now, as the competent authority at the island- and municipal-level, we make our own decisions and have authority in many areas, which means our basic terms are determined by us. But on many other issues of vital importance, we're affected by the economic decisions and interests of other territories. Regulation of moorage and inter-island maritime mobility are two matters that depend on other authorities, and those authorities are prey to powerful lobbies that put their own interests before protection of Formentera's natural surroundings. Even formentera.eco, a project agreed by islanders and local business which seeks to tackle vehicle saturation on the island during the high season, has begun to attract detractors — offshore businesses that see our island as a source of ever more benefits, and these at the expense of our interests and those of the individuals that will inherit what we leave behind.

Much remains to be done, not just in the safeguarding of our land, but in the protection of our basic rights, particularly in a year when social inequality and the fragility of our economy have been laid so utterly bare. And speaking of social justice, access to decent housing —a cause both social and political in nature— is of paramount importance. It is among our greatest challenges, and one we share with other areas under considerable pressure from tourism. It must be tackled forcefully and coordinating with every level of government. For this very reason, in the years ahead public participation will be more important than ever; to defend our customs and traditions, our social equilibrium, our sustainability and our future.

Striking a balance between tourism, territorial protections, and our residents' quality of life is possible when decisions are made by the people. This pandemic mustn't be a step backward, and no one can be left behind.

But steps down the path to a fairer, more equal society are meaningless if there are no guarantees on our future.

The Balearic Islands form an ensemble, an ensemble that aspires to respect its differences while endeavouring to ensure the well-being of each of its component parts. Throughout this crisis we've worked together to keep everyone safe, opening and closing ports and airports, adapting to public health guidelines in line with each island's particular situation. To stop the spread of this virus. We're not there yet, but we know we'll get there if we are guided by a sense of the common good.

Solidarity will again be crucial as we work on the vaccination timeline. The goal must be first to get vaccines to the most vulnerable and at-risk, and then very quickly to the rest of us, with our hopes set on herd immunity. I appeal to all levels of government to do everything possible to make sure we have enough vaccines to be able to do just that, so we can restore free movement and reactivate our economy.

We are an island thrice insular, a condition which, for all its disadvantages, has its good sides too: during the pandemic, it meant we could isolate, getting out of tight squeezes quickly while still enjoying the outdoors with exercise and walks.

There are many things that unite us in the Balearics, but it's our differences that make us unique, and Formentera will always defend those singular qualities. Today I'd like to share a cherished memory of a moment last year in the run-up to summer that united people across the islands. Lockdown restrictions had been eased for the first time, and suddenly we were able to go outside and roam the island as we'd never done before. As the days went by and our neighbours across the archipelago regained freedom of movement too, many eivissencs, mallorquins and menorquins came to visit. We saw new faces, recognised old ones, and built a kind of familiarity that's fundamental to feeling empathy and solidarity with one's region and one's people.

Restrictions are relaxing because recent weeks have seen a significant decline in local Covid-19 cases. But as you know, we need to remain alert as summer approaches, respecting safety protocol to avoid a second wave capable of endangering public health and the economy once again.

As talk turns to safeguarding our health and wellbeing, we can't not think about the six locals who lost their lives to Covid-19. My condolences go out to their families and friends and to all those who have lost loved ones to this pandemic.

And my thanks go to key workers who have kept working throughout this crisis. And to my fellow islanders, for your support and cooperation, and for making our job easier.

Days like today help us pull together and reach our shared goals, for though each of our islands is different, something we'll always defend, we cannot carry on like this if we don't struggle as one and take problems at the root — rather than simply devoting our time to damage control.

One year ago today, pre-pandemic, we said we wanted an island that was learned, free, cohesive and united.
This year, we need to add 'healthy' to that list. We want an island that is learned, free, cohesive, united and healthy.

I began my remarks by mentioning our local dance troupes' year of inactivity, and I'd like to conclude by sharing a special wish: that the colles might one day very soon gather anew in the square, and that all of us enjoy our traditional dancing and our unity as a people. Soon these memories will only serve to remind us to appreciate the big little things.

Moltes gràcies i feliç dia de les illes.

1 March 2021
Communications Department
Consell de Formentera