



This morning, FiC president Jaume Ferrer and Vicente Juan Segura, bishop of Eivissa and Formentera, officiated a ceremony that marked the reopening of the old Sant Francesc cemetery following restoration work. The grounds will now be open to public visits from Tuesday to Saturday, 10am to 2pm.

President Ferrer and Bishop Juan Segura were joined by local councillor of culture Sònia Cardona, Miquel Àngel Riera, priest of the Sant Francesc Xavier parish, Marià Castelló, project architect, Jaume Ferrer, Council staff specialist on patrimony, Toni Ferrer Abárzuza, historian, representatives from Refoart, the company that carried out site work, and Formentera residents eager to look upon a site closed to public viewing since 1940.

FiC president Ferrer announced that from 18 March the cemetery would join other island monuments like the wells of Ses Illetes, Marès, Ses Rates, Es Verro and Sa Tanca Vella that have been revamped to permit public viewing. The inner chambers of La Torre des Pi des Català are also currently undergoing restoration work in order to allow entry.

Ferrer explained: "This is one of many projects currently under way to restore Formentera's local heritage. It is important to work together with owners and the institutions behind such property, like in this case the church. At the Council we wish to extend our thanks to this institution for its cooperation."

For his part, Bishop Juan Segura thanked "the Formentera Council and the staff of each of the different departments involved for making this day possible" and asserted his confidence that "the residents and visitors of Formentera [would] greatly appreciate the restored site".

Patrimonial staff specialist Escandell noted that "*El Fossar Vell* [as the site is known locally] represents typical eighteenth-century architecture. In our case, the Sant Francesc fossar was already in use in 1757 and remained active until 1940. From that point on, burials began to take place at the current cemetery, whose construction had begun two years prior." The old cemetery forms part of the original town of Sant Francesc Xavier, which is why it is classified as

one of the municipality's cultural interest sites (or BIC, for bé d'interès cultural).

Marià Castelló, the architect in charge of restoration, explained: “We had three main objectives here. First, using physical elements already in place at the original construction, to establish this site as a true monument. Second, to reclaim the site for public-use; to turn the site – previously closed to the public – into a place where residents could stroll about and visit. Third and lastly, there is an important educational factor. We wanted the transformed Sant Francesc burial ground to reflect the site's original demarcating role: 'el Fossar Vell' is cut in half by an imaginary line that divides the original territory ceded to Marc Ferrer.”

Conscious of the cemetery's cultural relevance, the Formentera Island Council commissioned Antoni Ferrer Abárzuza to oversee a historical study before any plans were drafted. The study, explained Ferrer Abárzuza, found that the original cemetery had been smaller, but that in 1839 it was at the northwest and southwest sides, bringing the site to its present size.

Castelló highlighted the different historic periods of use by alternating the colours of the façade. The Council's total investment in the project – including both the initial study and restoration – is €57,000 plus €10,000 per year to employ a person who will open and oversee the chapels of Sa Tanca Vella, the Sant Francesc church and now El Fossar Vell to the public.