



This morning, the president, vice-president/patrimony secretary and adjunct vice-president/tourism secretary of the Formentera Council unveiled the administration's proposed request for financing under an annual plan to promote sustainable tourism. At 11.30am, the three officials—Jaume Ferrer, Susana Labrador and Alejandra Ferrer—held the presentation at Sa Senieta, a property located on carrer Pla de Rei in Sant Francesc.

The Council hopes to purchase Sa Senieta, a traditional country home, using funds obtained from the so-called “sustainable tourism tax”. The acquisition would play to the first goal of an annual plan to promote sustainable tourism: “purchasing and rehabilitating sites which are either emblematic or of significant value to the environment or local culture”. As the officials noted, the move would be particularly timely given that 2018 has been designated European Year of Cultural Heritage.

Rationale

Sa Senieta's unique historical value, singular qualities and strategic location in the heart of Sant Francesc Xavier make its purchase and restoration an appealing venture. The administration is looking into turning the building into a public space suitable to its particular level of protection.

Sa Senieta's owners recently contacted the Council and indicated that, despite a listing price of €3 million (m), a reduced figure—€2.5m—would be available to the administration. With an expected €1m to come from tax revenue, the Council would pay for the remaining €1.5m with its own money, or seek funding elsewhere.

Managing the heritage site

The acquisition would meet the demands of Formentera's 2017-2019 plan for administering cultural patrimony. Under that regime, which covers the restoration, conservation and acquisition of properties, priority is given to “sites with the highest patrimonial protections and those in the most advanced state of disrepair”.

Value as heritage site

Sa Senieta is the only site on the island designated historical patrimony under Balearic Islands' law 12/1998, of December 21, clearly marking it as an area of particular cultural interest. First included in the catalogue in 2002, the property possesses AT-C-150 distinction and level B protection in Formentera's catalogue of cultural heritage sites.

According to the catalogue, the site comprises “two buildings; one main dwelling (*dels senyors*) and another dwelling intended for the farm's keepers (*dels majorals*)”. The main dwelling is composed of both upper and lower stories; the dwelling for the farm's keepers consists of one storey alone. The main dwelling possesses a porch area that measures a considerable height, so much so that it is nearly flush with the ceiling of the rooms on the upper-level. One difference, according to the catalogue, “is that the rooftop of the upper-level rooms is tiled, while the porch rooftop is flat.” The catalogue describes the layout thus: “One room is located at the rear of the porch, with another sitting at the front. The latter juts out forming a right angle. To the left of the porch there is a long, low room with a door leading outside, as is common in cellars. One of the dwellings is situated overhead; another is atop the rear lower room. To the right of the porch is a door which provides access to the kitchen.” (Cardona-Escandell, 2000:76)

Unique qualities

Sa Senieta presents a unique example of traditional local architecture for a number of reasons. First, it comprises two dwellings, each reasonably large, with layouts that are more complex than what is customarily found on Formentera. Second, it is reasonably well conserved and has not been modified subsequently. Hence, the building's original characteristics, materials and finishes are unchanged. Third, current historical assessments of the building and the plot it occupies situate construction in the eighteenth century.

Es Pujols works projects

Last year, with revenues from the sustainable tourism tax, a comprehensive renovation was conducted of public services in Es Pujols. Those works included sanitation (rain water and sewage), water supply (fire hydrants and street cleaning), burial of overhead utility cables (lighting and telecom) and a repaving of the town's waterfront promenade.

The upgrades cost €2.4m, of which 20% was paid for by the sustainable tourism tax. The remaining sum was covered by the Formentera Council.