

It surely was a long summer break for ... some of us. The weather was mostly right and we have all come back safe and sound. Lots of stories and news reports for this coming school year, but first of all I should say that our school-based radio project is gaining momentum, particularly now that we have made the headlines in the local newspaper *Diario de Burgos* in its Wednesday, October 11 issue. All of us in Burgos Today just hope we can make an increasingly significant contribution to Burgos and its residents.

Now it's time to go to our newsroom with Bruno and Yolanda

I High Javier, these are today's main stories:

The redevelopment undertaken in Carrero Blanco area may be coming to an end. This is a project part-financed by the regional government which sought to give a facelift to an area that was heading for social exclusion. Residents have voiced their complete satisfaction as they realise the positive effect that the renovation work will have on the local community.

The highest accrued Retail Price Index within Castilla y León has been recorded in Burgos and is up 2,4%. According to professional associations, this reflects that purchasing power in Burgos is still high. Caja de Burgos blames housing and leisure-related items for the increase.

According to a survey carried out by Telecyl Estudios and commissioned by the regional government, Burgos gets higher scoring in working conditions than the rest of the provinces. Apparently, as many as 87,5 percent of all manufacturing units have prevention policies in place.

Contracts for the construction of 115 council flats at the *Flex* site have been awarded. 75 of them will be allocated to applicants under 35 and will be built by Inversiones Patrimoniales Urbanas. The remaining will be made available to individuals or families with special needs: large families, disabilities,

Barrio de Cortes Residential Development

A long time ago the old village of Gamonal was engulfed by Burgos urban sprawl. Today the city keeps spreading in all directions, particularly west and eastwardly, along the river and the motorway. Housing prices, it seems, have pushed many first-time buyers out of Burgos and into small-sized villages within a 20-kilometre radius: Villatoro, Cogollos, Villagonzalo, Villimar. These have become dormitory towns, a new phenomenon in city design and the only opportunity for those young couples to enter the housing market. People live in these areas and commute to work in Burgos.

The minute the City Council gives its approval to the rezoning of land to allow for residential development, cranes are thrown up and rows and rows of houses are built. As we speak, extensive digging is noticeable across the road from Cortes.

We went over there and this is what we saw.

We are standing right smack in the centre of Barrio de Cortes main open space area, designed in the shape of a quiet village in Castille but with a modern flavour. Now let's see if I can get away from this wild crowd Ok. There are beautiful terraced houses and some low-rise apartment blocks. Right behind me there is a community centre or leisure centre, complete with a bar on the ground floor. Nice outdoor facilities over there with a five-a-side court and a playground for kids.

The surrounding landscape is breath-taking. Barrio de Cortes stands on a hill overlooking Burgos. The A-1 motorway runs past quite close and between here and Burgos there is beautiful woodland that stretches down into Fuentes Blancas Park. To the left we can see extensive land being levelled and flattened. There are already signs of what will likely be a sewer system and street lighting. That is, laying the foundations for more and more dwellings.

There is always advocates and detractors in every issue that can be brought into discussion and surely new housing developments all around Burgos are no exception.

Some object to more land being made available to cope with the increasing population of Burgos as, they claim, Burgos population is not growing. Others doubt that the additional dwellings will not help to stabilise housing prices, even if that results in more accommodation being available in the housing market. One of the most common complaints is that there will be increased pressure on services, especially transport as the population increases. The access roads will become even more congested.

We have wanted to put all these questions to some locals and this is what we heard.

L I think that the population in Burgos is not growing at all. The birth rate, if it is growing is due to immigration and ... the birth rate among nationals is not growing. There is no point in rezoning this area between Burgos and Cortes.

H Isabel, will that claim by some within the city council, will that claim be groundless? That we can base that decision on some increasing population or estimated increase

L I think that population is not growing to increase but maybe the prices in Cortes are affordable for many families that can't buy a flat in Burgos.

H Yeah, particularly these first-time buyers that want to access the housing market. Now, among other claims that they sent to our studio, they said that or rather they claimed that these

additional dwellings will not help stabilise housing prices as at some stage was anticipated. Victoria do you have any thoughts about this?

L It's said that land is owned by a few and these people are those that set the price, so this is not a reason to rezone areas. It's not a way to stabilise prices, housing prices.

H Ok, so basically prices are coming down, housing prices will not come down, so we should not be too excited about that. Now, the issue about commuting, Nati. Would you prefer to live in Burgos if you were given the opportunity, that is, if prices were affordable.

L No, in fact I've been living in a village for eight years ...

H Have you?

L Yes, in Cardeñadijo. It was a nice period of time. I bought my house because the price was lower but when the children grow up, it's hard because you have to be in your car all day.

H Right, that's a very ... day-to-day experience, I would say. How has that experience, you know, on a daily basis been? Very time-consuming, I guess and nerve-wrecking.

I No, at the time I was living there, my children were not too

H Was that road congested, often?

I No, not at the time I went along there, about eight years ago. But now it's becoming ... congested.

H ... becoming congested all right. Ana, how would services be strained, you know, ... the fact that these communities both in Cortes and Villatoro grow very much. In other words, many people come to these areas to live. Would that an insurmountable pressure on services. Would Burgos city council have to struggle to provide them?

I Yeah, I think so, I think that the city council should take into account that all those families that live in those villages or ... that those villages that have been swallowed up by Burgos need the same facilities as the families who are living in the inner city or just near it. They should have the same shops and out-patient clinics and rubbish-collection and all those facilities.

H Right, OK. So same access to services and to same quality services. Now an open question for everybody present here. Our cities spread and as they spread they eat into rural areas. In other words, rural areas lose their character, their attraction, their charm. Would that be the case with Santander road as we drive to Villatoro?

I It's a value and I like to preserve the rural character and I think that the city council should be more concerned about that.

I Right

BICIBUR – The bright blue bikes

This past summer we were all taken by surprise when we saw rows of bikes, neatly set up at different locations. They had no locks on them. However, apparently anyone could unfasten them and go for a ride. They were the tangible element of a very ambitious council-funded scheme called BICIBUR. María has been walking into the right offices and has asked the right people about what exactly BICIBUR is all about.

I That's right Javier. Everybody knows that in every city the car remains king and that is up to local authorities to encourage bike use by making cities more bike-friendly.

H and Burgos has done its homework, hasn't it? We've seen long sections of cycle track being built which criss-cross the city...

I and that has paid off. Many now can ride at a leisurely pace without being knocked down by a car, choked by fumes or sworn at by aggressive motorists. The idea now is to take another step and talk motorists into abandoning the car for short journeys.

H So María, what is the goal behind BICIBUR? It is a bike loan scheme, isn't it?

I Indeed. It is a borrow-a-bike scheme funded, as you said, by Burgos City Council and one scheme which has to be seen as within a much more ambitious public bike transport project. Through it, they intend to promote cycling as a way to provide an alternative to car use....

H which is less environmentally-friendly and causes traffic congestion.

I Correct

H Where have the bikes been set up? Which are the pick up and drop off points?

I They have been set up at four locations at some distance from each other. Plaza de Santo Domingo de Guzmán, Plaza de San Agustín, just outside Gonzalo de Berceo public library in Pedro Alfaro Street and outside Regional Government Offices in Avenida de Castilla y León.

H It might be very convenient if someone who has picked up a bike from say Plaza de San Agustín, might be allowed to return it at ... the public library facility, for example. In other words, he would not have to use part of his allocated riding time for recreation to return it.

I That is exactly the way it works. A bike may be returned at a different point from which it was borrowed.

H would anyone who has returned the bike already ...say he changes his mind. He missed a building really worth seeing and wants to have a go again. Can he borrow the bike again?

I Once a bike has been returned, a card holder can use it again on the same day only after half an hour has elapsed.

H How does a potential user qualify?

I Any resident in Burgos registered with the city council Census Office can avail of the service, as well as tourists or backpackers passing through. You need to over 18, because if you are a minor you will need a parent's or guardian's authorization.

H How can you register? Do you need to hold any sort of card?

I You need to be a Bicibur card holder all right. You apply for this card at the Information Desk within the Town Hall. You fill out a registration form, make a 3-euro payment into the designated account at any bank, and finally, hand in both the completed form and the receipt of payment.

H So there is a small fee after all.

I Well, yeah, there is.

H the purpose of it? To make users more conscious of the fact that it is not their property and should take good care of it, is it?

I Yeah, I guess so. Something along those lines, anyway, because I doubt that it will make it any more self-sustainable.

H Anything else that our listeners should know María?

I The length of rides, Javier. It is up to 2 hours for residents and 3 hours for tourists and back-packers.

H So it is them not us that we spoil.

I You can put it that way if you like.

H And the riding times.

I in winter it will be available from 8,00 to 17,30, and in summer from 8,00 to 21,00. Oh, by the way, I forgot to say that should any card holder have not availed of this scheme for a whole year, his card will be written off and a new one will have to be reissued.

H Great, thank you very much María. I'm sure I'll see you cycling up and down Burgos any time.

I Certainly. Bye.