**Rooiels hosted a successful Information Cascade on Saturday 16th November**

The Rooiels community gathered on Saturday 16th November to learn more about Biosphere Reserves, the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve in particular and the role that Rooiels would like to play in supporting the natural environment and contributing to its scenic attraction as the Gateway to the Overstrand. More than a hundred residents gathered at the newly opened Gossip Corner – an elegant coffee shop designed to complement the surroundings. The guest speakers included Mr. Riaan Kuchar (Senior Town Planning Manager, Overstrand) and Dr. Ruida Pool-Stanvliet an Ecologist with Cape Nature and advisor to DEFF on the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Reserves in South Africa.

The Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve plays a key role in preserving the very rich biodiversity of the Cape Floral Kingdom. There are more plant species in our Biosphere than in all of the UK and the diversity per square km is higher than anywhere else on earth. Dr. Pool-Stanvliet spoke of how Biosphere Reserves bring people and nature together to support sustainable living. They are areas where land owners work together to ensure the conservation of a core nature area which may be government, provincial, municipal or privately owned. The buffer zones and the transition zones include increasing densities of human occupation and use where all commit, using a soft-law approach, to adapting land use so that it is compatible with conserving the nature in the core.

A working group of the Rooiels Ratepayers (RERA) has been discussing the implications of Rooiels becoming part of the buffer zone with some exciting ideas for research and information sharing on how to integrate human habitation in ways that enhance the core. Robust debate from a broad spectrum of opinions informed the working group discussions – and they were also a part of the RERA meeting on Saturday.

This continued when the Rooiels proposals for the revised Overstrand Municipal Land Use Scheme and Municipal Planning Bylaw that incorporates Heritage Protection and Environmental Management Overlay zones. The Planning Manager, Mr. Rian Kuchar was congratulated for the innovative approach using overlays that is in line with the most advanced town planning thinking internationally. Mr. Kuchar advised Rooiels that major changes to the documents were not possible at this stage but that it would be possible to insert the necessary provisions in future. He promised that the Overstrand Muncipality would work closely with Rooiels to see how best to accommodate what the residents presented as essential to maintaining the character of Rooiels and ensuring that it continues to provide a refuge for nature.

The meeting overwhelmingly endorsed pursuing inclusion of Rooiels into the Buffer zone of the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve, to support the Overlay Zones with minor corrections on the understanding that the OM will work closely with the RERA Working Group to see how best to ensure that Rooiels can develop its own Overlay that ensures the retention of the natural green context supporting its flora and fauna and enhancing its aesthetic, property and environmental value.