

# BUSINESS



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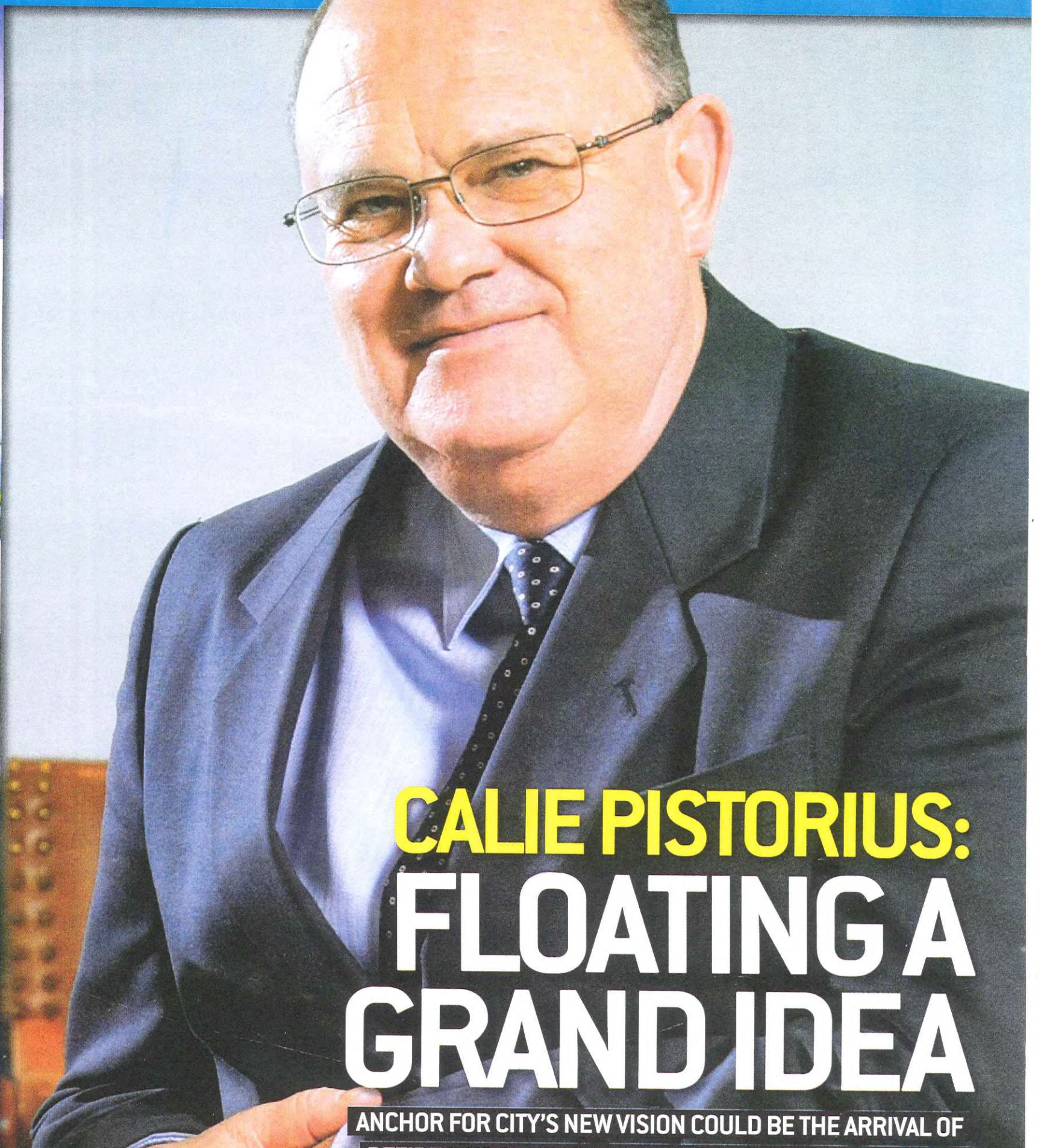
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## CALIE PISTORIUS: FLOATING A GRAND IDEA

ANCHOR FOR CITY'S NEW VISION COULD BE THE ARRIVAL OF  
RETIRED AIRCRAFT CARRIER HMS ILLUSTRIOUS **PAGES 6-7**

## INTERVIEW: CALIE PISTORIUS

# Why we should capitalise on Hull's illustrious heritage



WAVE OF ENTHUSIASM: Professor Calie Pistorius, vice-chancellor of the University Of Hull.

**Professor Calie Pistorius** is floating a grand idea to help regenerate Hull as a major tourist attraction. Ian Midgley finds out more from the University of Hull vice-chancellor

**I**f you want to make a statement of intent then you might as well make it a big one. That's why, if you are planning on making a splash in the Humber, it's best to do it with a 22,000-tonne aircraft carrier.

At least, that is what the vice-chancellor of the University of Hull, Professor Calie Pistorius, thinks.

The South African academic, who arrived in Hull to head its university in 2009, is the driving force behind an innovative scheme to bring HMS *Illustrious*, a 209m Royal Navy *Invincible*-class light aircraft carrier, to the city.

The plan is to dock the imposing warship near Hull's waterfront, bookending the Marina with The Deep and creating a self-contained cluster of tourist attractions.

To some, such a grandiose scheme initially sounded pie in the sky, if not an unfeasibly large boat in an estuary, but this isn't an idea that has just been plucked out of thin air – or muddy brown water.

When it comes to historic ships, economic impact, business plans and city regeneration, Professor Pistorius knows his stuff – and bringing an illustrious future to Hull may not be so far-fetched after all.

Now, as part of Hull's City Leadership Board, a team drawn together from leading private- and

public-sector organisations to help secure a prosperous future for the region, the 54-year-old's ideas have been adopted as part of its City Plan – a ten-year vision to revitalise the city and create 7,500 jobs through tourism, green energy and new technology industries.

It's still a fledgling idea – a “wouldn't it be great if” nugget of a possibility – and the HMS *Illustrious* is still very much in active service until next year.

But the Ministry Of Defence has announced that when the aircraft carrier is decommissioned in 2014, it will be preserved for the nation – after its two sister ships HMS *Ark Royal* and *Invincible* have, as Prof Pistorius puts it, “been scrapped and turned into razor blades”.

When that moment comes, the professor wants Hull to have a water-tight, economically sound bid for it ready and waiting.

The idea came to him, he says, during the drive home from visiting the Royal Yacht *Britannia*, which is now docked in Edinburgh, giving the Professor a chance to ponder Hull's history as one of the world's great maritime cities.

“It's a long drive back,” he says. “That's a lot of thinking time.”

But it will only work if Hull can land a ship as iconic as HMS *Illustrious*, he insists, pointing to reports carried out by American academics highlighting the economic regeneration that tourist attractions such as the historic battleship USS *North Carolina* have helped to generate Stateside.

Similarly, Edinburgh's port area of Leith – best-known south of the border for being the subject of a maudlin Proclaimers song – has experienced a similar boost since the arrival of *Britannia*.

“It's got to be super-iconic,” he says, sitting at the conference table in his oak-panelled office, on the first floor of the university's Venn Building.

“Belfast has its Titanic Museum, Portsmouth has the HMS *Victory* and the Mary Rose and Edinburgh has the Royal Yacht *Britannia*. Why shouldn't Hull, with its rich maritime history, have an equally iconic ship? You don't

## Calie Pistorius

**PROFESSOR** Carl “Calie” Pistorius, born in 1958, is vice-chancellor of the University of Hull.

He graduated in electronic engineering at the University of Pretoria in South Africa and gained a master's degree in electrical engineering from the Ohio State University in the US.

He became head of the university's Department of Electronic and Electrical Engineering for five years and Dean of the Faculty for one and a half years.

He was the University of Pretoria's vice-chancellor from 2001 to 2009 before taking up his role in Hull.

# HULL & EAST RIDING

**POTENTIAL ATTRACTION:** Calie Pistorius is the driving force behind a scheme to get the Royal Navy aircraft carrier HMS *Illustrious* berthed in Hull permanently.



Professor Pistorius. He says: "You have got to create the vision and you have got to inspire the people to get on with it."

"You can't just have the vision, you need the people to make it happen. I think with the City Leadership Board we've now got that. We've got the business leaders who have invested their time and energy in this and they will drive it on."

Walking into Prof Pistorius's suite leaves you in no doubt that this is a man with a deep and lifelong love of maritime history.

From the emotive oil painting depicting a Humber Keel, from 1862, which hangs in his office reception, to the glass encased models of steam tugs, sitting atop his shelves, everywhere you look are reminders that this was a city built on its success at sea.

With HMS *Illustrious* parked on Hull's shoreline, its vast hangar perhaps serving as a conference centre, event venue or even a restaurant, as on ships in India and China, success could come from the sea once again.

The key is to make Hull "sticky", says Professor Pistorius, who built his academic reputation as an electrical engineer.

"One million people pass through Hull every year," he says. "The key is to get them to stay and not just use Hull as a gateway en-route to somewhere else. "We've got to show people what Hull has to offer - it has so much. We need to shout about it."

get much more iconic than an aircraft carrier.

"We've got to make the most of our competitive advantages. Hull's a wonderful city with a long and proud maritime history. We're an eastern seaboard city that faces Europe, we've got a compact city centre and a fantastic heritage tale to tell. We've got all the elements needed to create a maritime cluster around the Marina

and the old Fruit Market, with the *Illustrious* at one end, The Deep at the other and an avant-garde tourism area in between.

"It's all about creating a cluster of attractions to keep people in Hull. The one element we're missing is an iconic ship that will work as a nucleus or catalyst for the whole thing."

HMS *Illustrious* may be a central plank of the City Plan's tourism drive,

but it is only one corner of a bigger picture, says Professor Pistorius.

Only a co-ordinated and focused approach on all fronts will achieve the aims that the City Leadership Board has set itself, he says, but he is optimistic they can be met.

Where loudly trumpeted schemes may have failed to deliver in the past, this time the will to make the City Plan work will see it succeed, believes