



FUTURE PROOF MUSEUMS



Image courtesy of Southend Museum

Southend Museum Business Model

Authors: Julie Aldridge and Pam Jarvis



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“The Museum is now focused on its core purpose and what it can do for Southend – rather than on self-defence.”

Simon May

Group Manager of Libraries and Museums at Southend



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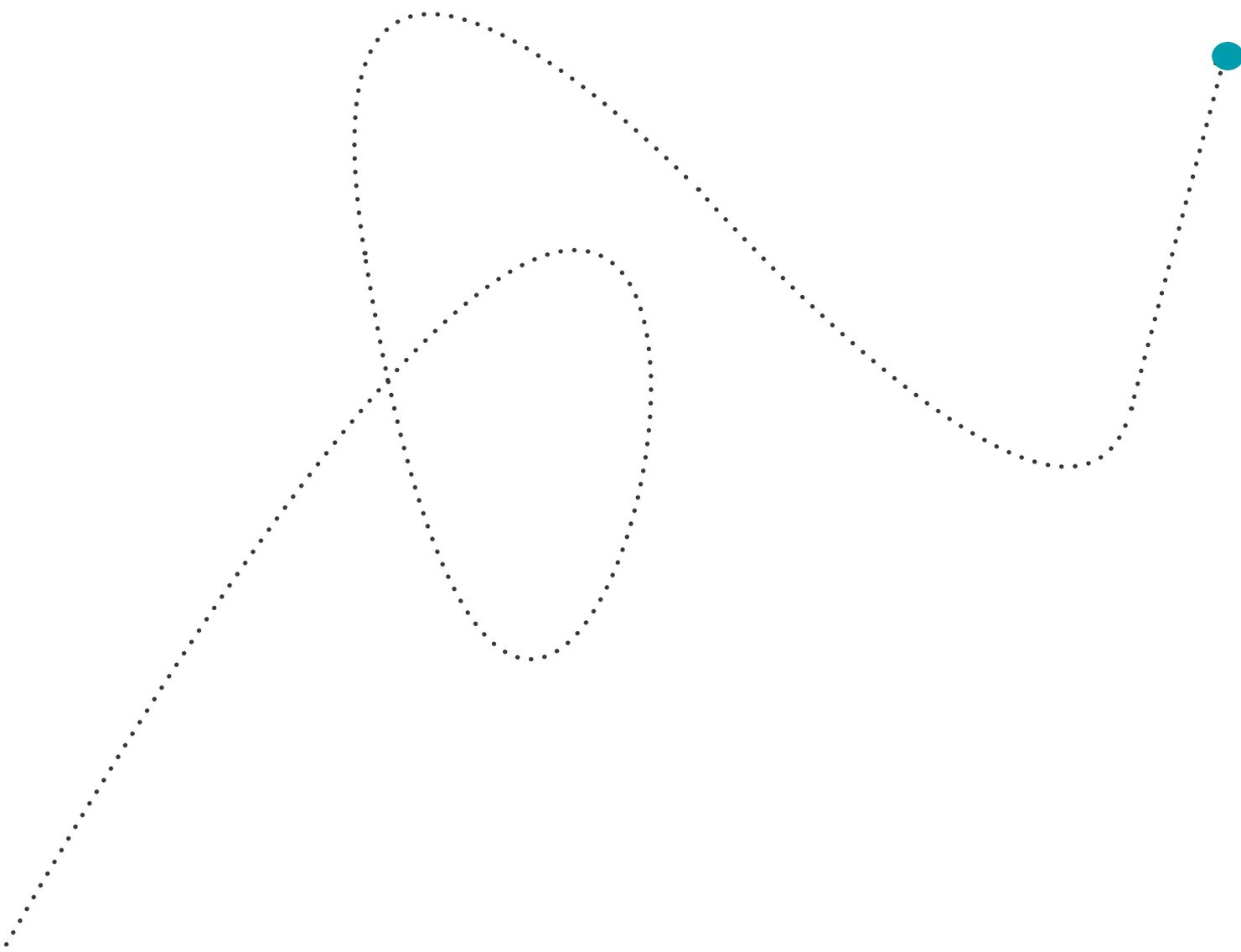
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Steps on a big journey: Southend Museum

After several decades of staying the same, Southend Museums needed to do some serious thinking about the future. The museum could not carry on as it was. The “safe bubble” was not sustainable and the brutal truth was that “there will be a lot less money”.

Simon May, Group Manager of Libraries and Museums at Southend, was energised by taking a “start from scratch” approach to review who the museums service is for, what it stands for, and how it might make a difference to the people of Southend.

Simon took part in the AMA’s Future Proof Museums programme and started by creating a manifesto to articulate the journey that the museums service needed to take and to envisage the end goal that they were aiming for.



The manifesto

“The Estuary Experience will be a world-class visitor attraction offering immersion in the stories of the ‘River that Built the World.’”

Creating a manifesto helped Simon to move staff beyond the mindset that everything is problematic by convincing them of a realistic ambition and a more positive future. The manifesto fed into the vision for a new museum and its look and feel.

They are now developing a plan that is deeply rooted in Southend, seeking to play a vital role in the future of the area:

“The Estuary Experience will raise the profile and improve perception of Southend, South Essex and the wider area... Visitors to the Estuary Experience will discover and share pride in Southend and be eager to return and stay longer in the town, often overnight, and know Southend better. Local hospitality businesses will support the Estuary Experience and see it as helping generate business for them. Local residents will be proud to have the Estuary Experience and be its advocates, supporting the Council and its partners in delivering it, and encouraging others to visit. The attraction will be the biggest talking point of the town and continue the journey of cultural-led regeneration.”

A revised business model

To deliver its vision, Southend Museums are developing a revised business model. It seeks to define the new museum's competitive advantage and the value it will offer to audiences when faced with choices on how to spend their time.

As part of this they are planning how to develop significant independent business streams, proactively seeking new funding opportunities, and working in partnership with other organisations to access additional resources and engage more people. The premise for the new business model is based on a mix of:

- increasing focus on earned income from visitors — creating an experience that more visitors are prepared to pay for and adding value to the town's tourism offer
- aligning with local authority ambitions to enhance the destination by providing a reason to visit Southend and contributing to the town's economy
- unlocking access to essential resources through partnerships e.g. with local businesses, with new initiatives such as seafront walks and linked tickets with the Pier tourism, and connections with community organisations

Some of Simon's colleagues found the idea of focusing on generating income difficult: "earning money is not what a museum does."

Tools and frameworks

Through their involvement in Future Proof, Simon was introduced to business model tools and frameworks that enabled him to have clearer conversations with colleagues about the value that the museum delivers in Southend.

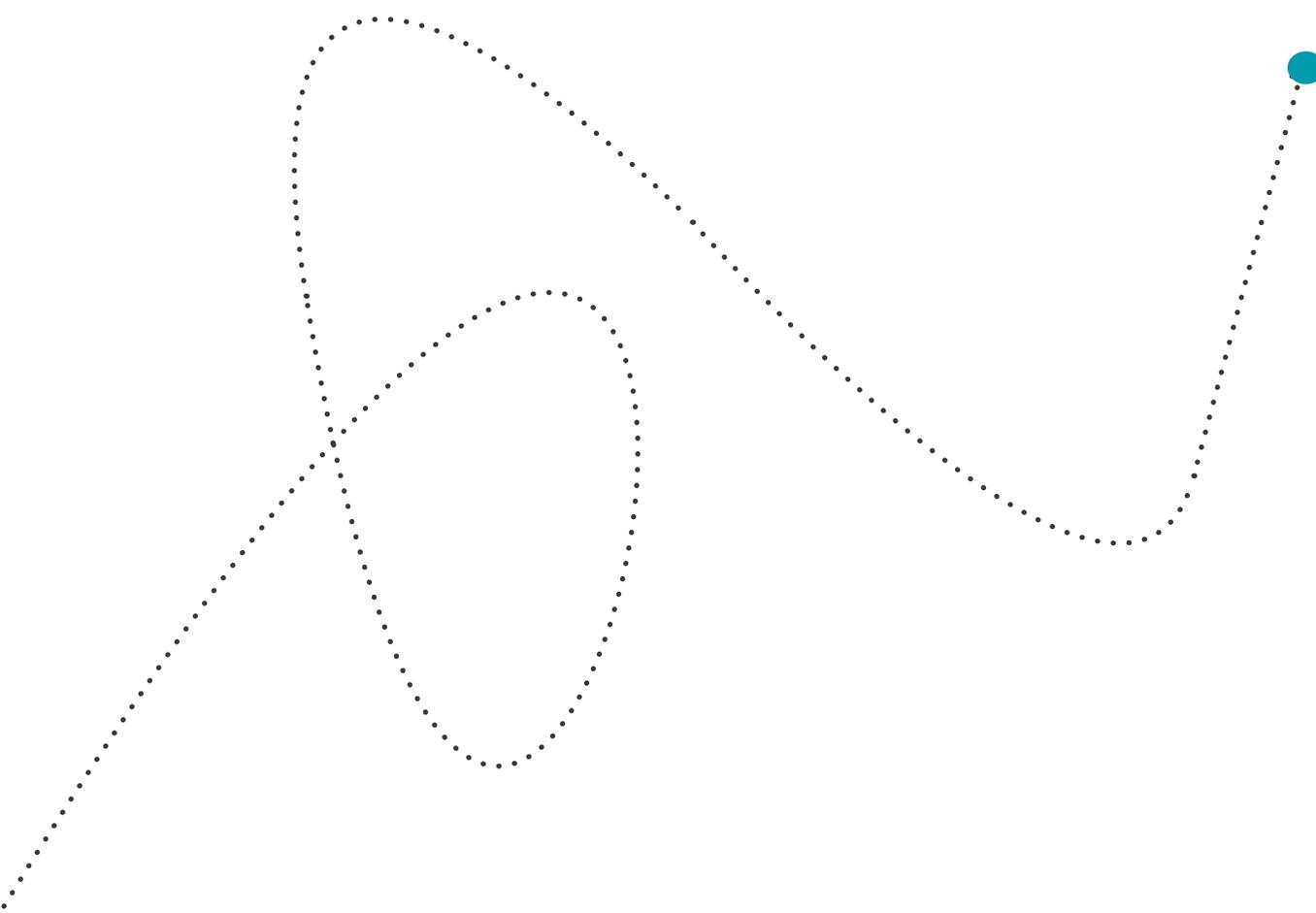
He used these tools to spark conversation and creative ideas about:

- how to generate greater income to sustain the museum
- through generating greater value for visitors and for Southend

This fits in with their reasons for working in the museum. “Most of the team are local so they can relate to the idea of how the new museum can make their town more attractive and profitable.”

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For more ideas and inspiration, please see [Ideas to spark your future business model](#).





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