



FUTURE PROOF MUSEUMS



Image courtesy of Doncaster Museum

Doncaster Museum Business Model

Authors: Julie Aldridge and Pam Jarvis



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

“History should support and add value to our lives, not hinder us. So, we will work to build pride in Doncaster, a town and area with a fascinating past and some great achievements.”

Carolyn Dalton

Doncaster Museum



Published 2017

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales Licence](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/uk/)

Rethinking the past:

Doncaster Museum

“Cut us in half and ‘We are Donny’ will be written through us like a stick of rock. It is at the heart of us and will drive us into the future. We believe that history gives us a sense of place and an understanding of who we are. By acting as custodians of Doncaster’s heritage ‘We are Donny’ and we belong to the people.”

This quote is taken from the start of the new manifesto created by Carolyn Dalton, Heritage Services Manager for Doncaster as part of her involvement in the AMA’s Future Proof Museums programme. The manifesto has been crucial in providing clarity on how the museums service could connect with communities.

Future Proof Museums was the catalyst that revealed how the museum service could become an agent of social change in Doncaster’s post-industrial context.



Image courtesy of Doncaster Museum

“We desire to play a bigger and more meaningful role in the community than we do at present. Professionally we take the long view of history and so are ideally placed to assist those prevented from moving forward by past events, such as the closure of the coal mines. History should support and add value to our lives, not hinder us. So, we will work to build pride in Doncaster, a town and area with a fascinating past and some great achievements. At the same time, we should challenge people, encourage them to have new perspectives, to be creative and to have fun doing so.”



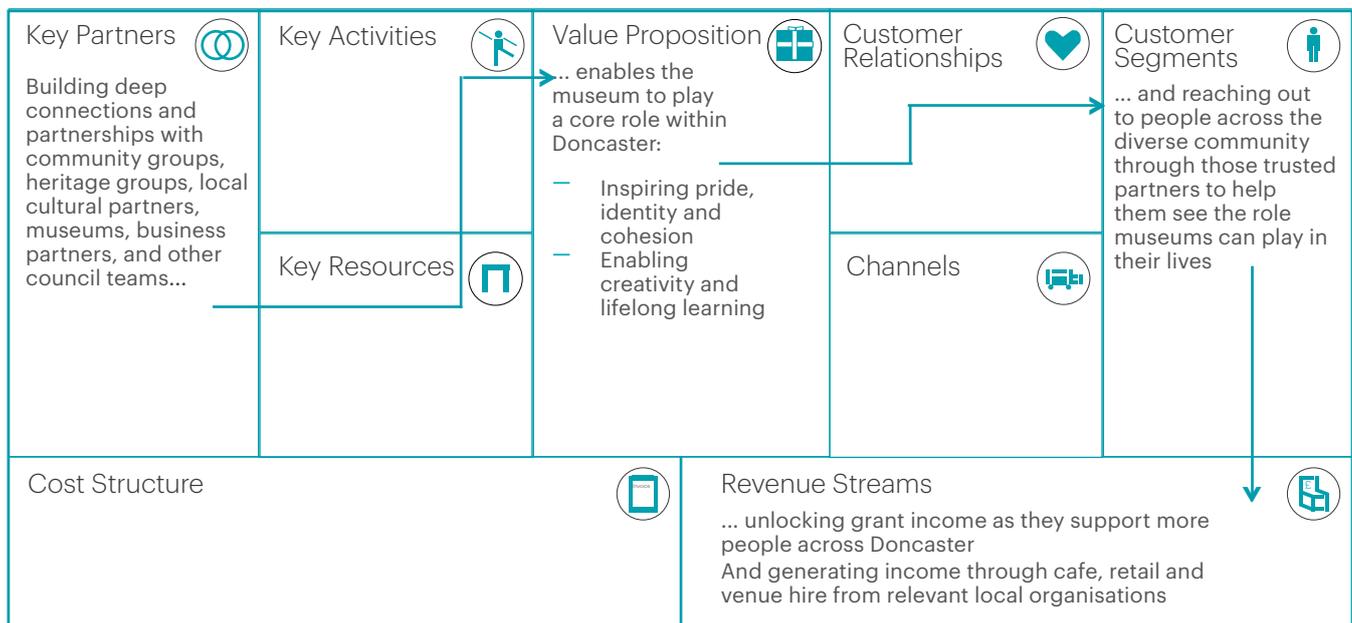
Carolyn Dalton
Doncaster Museum

This involves reframing a nostalgic view of the town's past through creating a more positive attitude to its future. It means placing living history at its heart and exploring the past and present of Doncaster in people-focused ways. It repositions the museum as an integral part of the community by recognising what is and isn't important in its role.

The business model canvas

Developing the business model canvas through the Future Proof programme allowed different agendas to be untangled through a lucid, simple and ordered framework. Thinking through the value proposition gave the museum a clarity of purpose which had not previously been articulated. It provided a quick route to distil the value it offers audiences and stakeholders and identify how key elements all fit together.

The following canvas has been simplified for the purpose of this case study:



Based on the Business Model Canvas by [Strategyzer.com](https://www.strategyzer.com)

The impact

Developing the business model canvas has resulted in:

Deeper insight into their relevance for local communities

The canvas inspired the type of creative thinking which is needed in the current local authority context. Her line manager and staff now have a better understanding of how the museum could operate. The revised business model focused on:

- people
- their relevance to local communities
- their support and services for users and volunteers
- partnerships with community groups, arts and heritage organisations, and local businesses
- themselves



Image courtesy of Doncaster Museum

Productive dialogue with the local authority

The process has started a more productive dialogue with the local authority by enabling Carolyn to demonstrate the museum's relevance in contributing to its priorities and placemaking agenda.

The new sense of the museum's purpose is also informing thinking on:

- displays and content for its new building
- the use of digital technology,
- their connections with the people of Doncaster who they believe at heart love and take pride in their town and area

“When in Aesop's Fables a miser buries his gold and it is stolen, his neighbours advise him to put a rock in its place for all the good that it was doing. If we are not careful these are our collections. We have a duty to preserve them for future generations, but this must be weighed against the benefits that they can bring to their current owners — the people of today.”



Image courtesy of Doncaster Museum

Securing funding to drive forward the new approach

Critically, Future Proof Museums led Carolyn to realise that to fulfil the role she believes the museum should take within Doncaster it needs to be able to work with greater freedom to adapt and evolve in line with opportunities and challenges identified by working closer with communities and partners.

The impetus of this new goal is informing business planning and a successful bid to the ACE Resilience Fund to support this transition and to strengthen digital, volunteering and marketing strands 'to get the museum into better shape' for NPO status. The new business model will inform a pitch to the local authority for trust status.

Since the programme, Doncaster Museum has become an NPO and £100,000 p.a. will be used to drive forward the new community engagement work. They have also secured just under £80,000 from Esmee Fairbairn for a two-year project working with communities. In both cases they will be evaluating the work to continue to shape this future direction and have deeper impact for the community.

The community engagement work will feed into plans for a new Library, Museum, Gallery and Archive – which have all just been approved.

For more information to help you develop your business model, please see [Ideas to spark your future business model](#).

“Future Proof Museums increased my skills and confidence in business modelling, gave me more confidence in my leadership, why we do what we do, and how to get where we want to be. The manifesto, business modelling and leadership enhancement proved stable points in structuring my thinking in a fluctuating environment and helped me prioritise what matters. It is proving transformational.”

Carolyn Dalton

Doncaster Museum



culturehive.co.uk

learn from your peers online