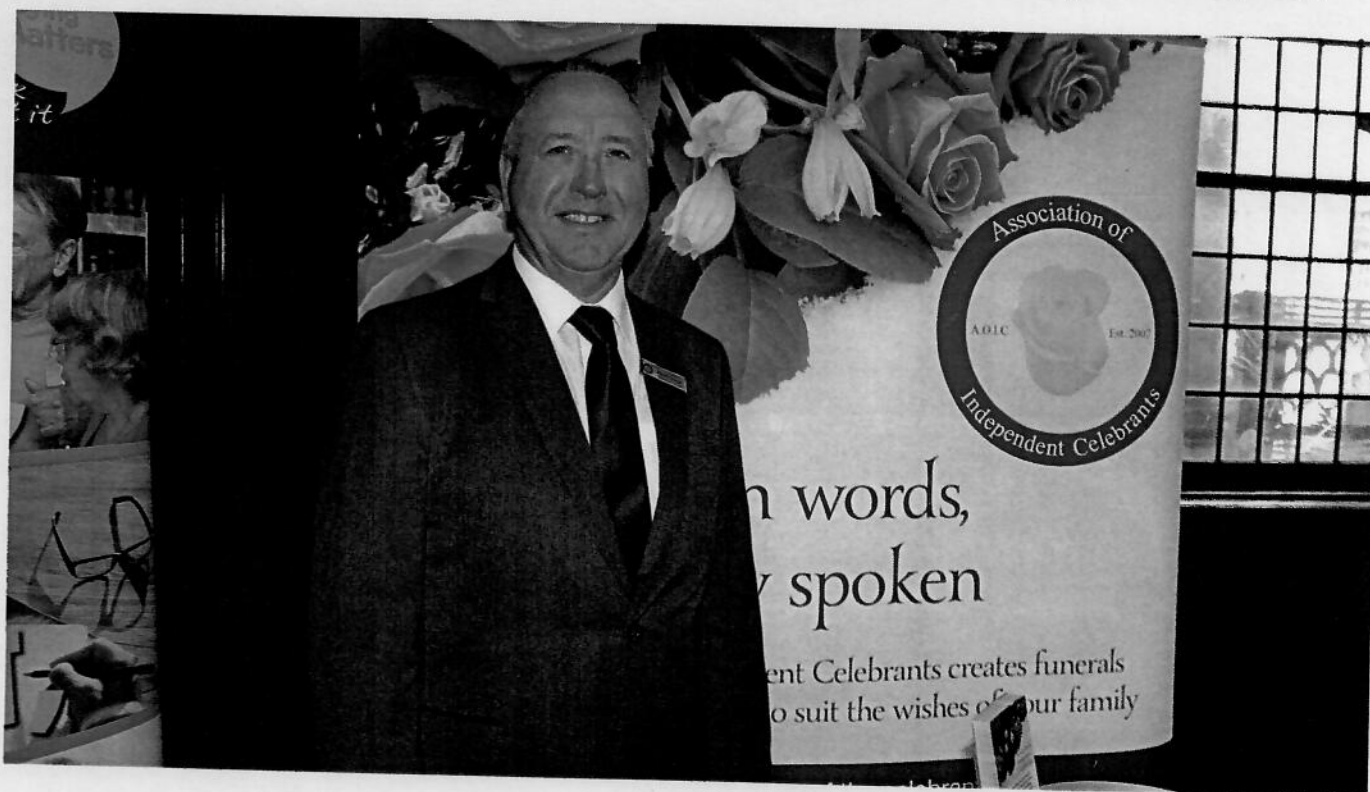


# SOAPBOX: AOIC

In his latest article for the Funeral Service Times, the executive chair of the Association of Independent Celebrants, **Philip Spicksley**, looks at a profession that is starting to work together.



**L**asting and positive change can often be difficult to achieve but is certainly worth the effort, we must keep this in our minds as we work towards the regulation of the funeral profession, and indeed the work of celebrants.

Recently our association headed up the second such meeting for professional celebrant associations which was attended by some leading dignitaries within the national funeral industry. Such a gathering represents a further indication of those within the celebrant profession working together for the good of the profession.

The event provided the chance to network, which is of great benefit in the profession. While many of us are members of associations and organisations, we are spread across the length of the UK and as a result do not get the chance to meet as often as we would like.

Take our association as an example, we have members living from Scotland to Jersey and almost everywhere in-between. So, as professional celebrants we really do appreciate the time and effort people take to stage events like this. They allow us to

have some relaxed and informative time together, it is by talking to each other that we can find common ground and share best practice and ideas.

Meanwhile, as we look now towards the summer, I would just like to make mention again of a very important event that has just taken place as it does every spring, Dying Matters Week.

I know many celebrants took part in various events that were held across the UK in May joining other groups, businesses and organisations in supporting the week. If you want to know more, it is certainly worth logging on to [www.dyingmatters.org](http://www.dyingmatters.org) which explains all.

I am a member of the North Lincolnshire Dying Matters Awareness Committee, a group that meets regularly to promote the charity.

This year I have attended two promotional events, one at Marshall's Yard, Shopping Centre in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire where I supported a local firm and spoke to lots of shoppers who found it surprising and interesting to find us out and about in the centre promoting our work.

The other event was a full day show by

various suppliers in the funeral industry at the Masonic Hall in Grimsby, North East Lincolnshire.

I would encourage anyone involved in the funeral industry to make enquiries and get involved in events planned for next year. It costs nothing to join Dying Matters, which is part of Hospice UK.

It is so very important that we continue to raise awareness among the public that dying does indeed matter and is a natural part of life, which we should all feel able to discuss with our loved ones.

As celebrants, we are an integral part of allowing such discussions to happen, indeed our ceremonies are only ever held after talking to people about their last wishes, or of course the wishes of their families and friends. We are best placed in helping to change perceptions and encourage people to talk more openly. Let us hope we continue to play an active part in this very special week.

*For more details on the AOIC please see our website, [www.independentcelebrants.com](http://www.independentcelebrants.com).* ■