

HAVE YOU GOT A LOCAL BUSINESS STORY THAT STANDS OUT FROM THE REST? EMAIL news@theadvertisergroup.co.uk

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Tom and Ben on cue to pocket profit from load of old balls

MANY of us can remember the days of *Pot Black* on TV and the snooker superheroes of Alex 'Hurricane' Higgins and Steve 'Interesting' Davis, but as interest in the sport has dwindled, a Letchworth-based business has recognised this and is 'up cycling' tables for a new, green market.

Slate Furniture Works, run by Tom Parker and business partner Ben Rayner, pick up vintage and unwanted snooker, billiard and pool tables from all over the UK.

They use the Welsh slate tops and other hardwood parts to build furniture for many uses – indoors and out – including dining tables and in kids' playrooms for table tennis tables.

The tables are cleaned up and then hand crafted and designed into pieces of furniture which are delivered to customers all over Europe.

Tom explained: "I get this amazing material to work with – the thick slate and the fine oak or mahogany woodwork which can both be used to create unique pieces for both inside and outdoors. The products are definitely different and of course 'up-cycling,'

as it is termed, is very popular at the moment."

The idea was the brainchild of Tom, who with Ben, has more than 30 years' experience in restoring snooker and billiard tables which date back to the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Tom started out after leaving school working for his uncle who ran Hamiltons, a snooker table business in London and Hertfordshire which bought and sold tables, as well as recovering pool tables in youth clubs and other venues.

Tom learned on the job and does all fitting, restoring and finishes while Ben is responsible for all repairs.

"The range of products we make is inspired by giving these majestic and sometimes very old pieces a new lease of life.

"Although it is still rarely used for furniture, reclaimed Welsh slate has a look and feel that suits both period and contemporary environments. Because it doesn't rot and will maintain its original appearance almost indefinitely, it is also very suitable for outdoor use or in conservatories."



Start-ups' time coming to an end

THE judging panel for the 11th annual Startups Awards has been announced, with some of the greatest business brains in Britain set to assess entrants across the East of England. Nineteen high profile judges have been selected, including entrepreneurs, CEOs and managing directors of the country's most successful companies, as well as media experts. They will assess all 15 awards on offer, with winners announced at a prestigious ceremony at Kensington Roof Gardens, London, on Thursday 27 November. Sponsored by Simply Business and organised by Startups.co.uk, the No1 website for start-ups and small businesses, the awards – open for entry until September 12 – recognise the success of Britain's newest businesses which have been trading for three years or less.

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