TEXTRON

A threat to jobs at Textron's Ipswich headquarters has receded following a review on the future viability of the manufacturing facility.

In the last few weeks Textron initially announced that the review "may potentially place some jobs at risk" and added that "the company will be working with its workforce and relevant interested community agencies in the review. The study does not affect the Sales, Marketing, Customer Service or Engineering parts of the company".

The initial statement, by Steve Chicken, Textron Managing Director continued, "Uncertainty in the worldwide golf and municipal markets, as well as tough global market conditions, has increased the difficulties of maintaining financial performance. We need to find ways of more efficiently delivering our brands to our customers and maintain competitiveness in an aggressive marketplace."

However, despite such an ominous warning there was better news when the review was completed and Steve Chicken was able to make a much more positive announcement a few weeks later.

In the statement he said, "It has quickly become clear that we can serve our European customer base best by maintaining our current manufacturing facility, as such the Ipswich plant will not close. We shall continue to produce the municipal and European golf-related products in the Ipswich plant. We shall continue to improve efficiencies within the manufacturing process by adopting contemporary world-class automotive practices as employed in our American factories. This is good news for everyone associated with the company and the news was unanimously welcomed by the entire workforce and enthusiastically embraced by the local Trade Union representatives and community leaders."

"The decision to continue with production in Ipswich was strongly supported by our American parent company. We have secured the future financial success of Ipswich with an aggressive plan for the sales of our products over the coming months and years. The continued support of our dealer network, who have been particularly positive over the past few weeks, to make these plans a reality is a key factor. We intend to continue to produce top quality turf equipment for the global marketplace from the Ipswich site as well as from our facilities in the USA."

"The current range of golf and municipal products built in Ipswich today will continue unaffected with the exceptions of the Multi-mower, the T-Plex 180, the Triple 18 and the Greens Super range which will be discontinued as stocks run out during the months ahead."

"As I said in my previous statement, we remain totally committed to the Ransomes brand and to Ipswich as a base for manufacturing, selling, supporting and designing high quality products for the worldwide market."

RAIN AT ST ANDREWS

Recent excessively wet weather has had a noticeable effect on the numbers of rounds of golf being played at St Andrews Links. After last year's new record of 215,000 total rounds, this year seemed to be following the same path - until June. With 50% more rain than usual for June, the number of rounds played at St Andrews in June was down by 7% on last year, with the decrease affecting both local and visiting golfers.

Golfers who have ventured out in between downpours will have noticed the effect of the heavy rainfall on the courses as there has been more than the usual greenkeeping activity taking place at the world's most famous golfing venue.

"The greenkeeping teams have had to concentrate on managing the rough including invasive plants such as clover, which is more difficult to spray effectively in wet weather," explained Gordon Moir, Links Superintendent at St Andrews.

"We have had strong winds which displace the sand in the bunkers resulting in many hours spent reshaping and restoring the bunkers. The courses are more lush and greener than we would like. On the bright side, it only takes a few dry and breezy days to firm up the greens to traditional links standards."