Press Release

October 27, 2021

Bilfinger supporting retrieval of radioactive waste from former Asse mine

- **Cooperation with Federal Company for Radioactive Waste Disposal**
- **Development and testing of high-tech machines for retrieving radioactive material**
- **Retrieval of thousands of casks underground using special remote-controlled machines**

Bilfinger is contributing to the safe retrieval of radioactive waste from former Asse II mine in Lower Saxony. On behalf of the Federal Company for Radioactive Waste Disposal (Bundesgesellschaft für Endlagerung – BGE), a team of experts is developing special equipment that could be used to safely retrieve thousands of casks containing low and intermediate-level radioactive waste from the mine shaft. The casks are then to be disposed of in accordance with current technology and legislation. The contract has a term of around four years and includes the design and testing of special machines and tools that can be operated remotely.

“With our decades of experience in handling radioactive waste and our customized solutions, we are helping to ensure that the Federal Company for Radioactive Waste Disposal can implement a reliable process for the safe retrieval of radioactive waste from the Asse II mine,” says Christina Johansson, interim CEO and CFO at Bilfinger. “As a long-standing partner to the nuclear industry, we deliver services covering the entire lifecycle of nuclear plants: From new build and modernization to decommissioning and waste treatment.”

A team from Würzburg-based subsidiary Bilfinger Noell will work with mining specialist and Thyssen Schachtbau subsidiary OLKO-Maschinentechnik GmbH to develop and build special machine prototypes with which the radioactive waste stored in metal casks can be recovered remotely and prepared for removal. The retrieval work is particularly difficult because the casks are partially buried in salt, among other challenges. Special requirements in the mining industry also apply in addition to the strict conditions of the nuclear sector, meaning that particularly stringent demands are placed on the safety of the equipment. With the help of the special tools from Bilfinger, the casks can later be safely recovered from a depth of 511 and 725 meters.

“The retrieval of radioactive waste from a decommissioned salt mine is unique in the world and we are pleased that Bilfinger Noell GmbH is lending its support with this technologically very demanding project,” says Jens Köhler, Head of the Asse unit at BGE.

The Asse II mine is a former salt mine close to the German city of Braunschweig. It was tested for suitability as a final repository for radioactive waste in the 1960s. There, radioactive waste is stored in thousands of metal casks on three levels. In the coming decades, the casks will be retrieved using special machines so that the radioactive waste stored at that time can be treated and properly disposed of in accordance with current technological and legal standards.

Bilfinger Noell GmbH has decades of nuclear engineering experience and supplies components, systems and services for the construction, operation and decommissioning of nuclear facilities and for the treatment of radioactive waste.

Recent projects include, among others:

- Support for the design, fabrication and commissioning of one of the world's largest hot cells for the safe treatment and interim storage of spent fuel assemblies from the Chernobyl nuclear power plant
- Design, fabrication and commissioning of the complete hot cell equipment for the French radioactive waste conditioning facility ICEDA
- Design, manufacture and commissioning of the waste treatment plant and components for two core melt stabilization systems for the new nuclear power plant Hinkley Point C, which is under construction in the United Kingdom
- Design and implementation of the dismantling of the steam generators in the decommissioned Mülheim-Kärlich nuclear power plant