

Press Release

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2016-04-26

Groundbreaking for small hydropower plant 'Alte Bleiche' on Voith factory premises Heidenheim

Heidenheim, Germany. The technology Group Voith is building a small hydropower plant on its factory premises in Heidenheim, which will serve as a demonstration hydro power plant for customers, employees and the interested public. It will use an innovative concept to generate electricity that will see a compact and environmentally friendly turbine installed in the river Brenz. Voith apprentices will play an important role in the project.

Construction on the small hydropower plant 'Alte Bleiche' started with a symbolic groundbreaking on April 26, 2016 after a preparation phase of about 12 months. The plant and the associated exhibition room and control container are scheduled to go into operation at the end of the year. "With an installed capacity of 35 kW, the power plant will produce 286,000 kWh of green electricity per year, which we will directly feed into our local grid. This equates to the consumption of approximately 100 households per year," explains Klaus Schaedler, Head of Product Group Small Hydro. The project costs will come to a mid-6-digit euro amount.

The small hydropower plant 'Alte Bleiche' will be installed into an existing weir system of the Brenz. In cooperation with TU Munich (Technical University of Munich) an ecological solution for a so-called shaft power plant was developed that will see a turbine and generator installed inside a concreted chamber below the riverbed. By utilizing existing dam structures and eliminating the need for a power house, it will be possible to build the power plant in a very cost-efficient manner. In addition, the StreamDiver power plant will not generate noise emissions or have minimum impact on the natural scenery, making it more acceptable to the public.

Construction for the 'Alte Bleiche' project will start with the retaining of the Brenz and a cut of the existing weir shutter. Following this, civil works and the installation of the hydraulic steel structure will commence. This will

include, for example, installing a shut off valve, an innovative submerged trash rack and cleaning system. At the same time, the power unit and control cubicles will be constructed, as well as the exhibition room. After installation of the turbine generator unit the 'Alte Bleiche' hydropower plant will start the operation. It will then be ready to be visited by customers, employees and the interested public.

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The small hydropower plant 'Alte Bleiche' will be equipped with the StreamDiver, a new turbine generator unit developed by Voith. It was developed specifically for river plants with low heads and is thus ideally suited for the Heidenheim location on the Brenz. In comparison with traditional turbines, the StreamDiver impresses as a compact, oil-free submersible turbine, allowing for a standardized and cost-efficient plant concept with a low impact on the environment. This minimizes the necessary impacts on the environment in the installation phase.

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Most of the existing dams worldwide are not used to generate energy. In Germany alone, only 7,400 of around 55,000 river dams are utilized as hydropower plants. North America, Brazil, Southeast Asia and Africa also have great potential for small hydropower plants. The StreamDiver is an economical and ecological solution to utilize this untapped potential.

A special aspect of the 'Alte Bleiche' project will be the substantial integration of Voith's technical apprentices. They are for example deployed in the design, manufacture and installation of the turbine and will take care of the control cabinet assembly. Furthermore, students from the Cooperative State University Baden-Württemberg (Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg, DHBW) will participate in project management and engineering. "The small hydropower plant 'Alte Bleiche' is a major interdisciplinary project for our apprentices who will contribute significantly to the project's success. Moreover, we are also strengthening our reputation as an attractive training company with this project," says Erwin Krajewski, Head of Voith Apprenticeship.

Hydropower is the largest, oldest and most reliable form of renewable energy generation. Worldwide it makes an indispensable contribution to stable power supplies and hence to economic and social development – both in industrial countries and in emerging markets. At the same time, hydropower significantly contributes to climate-protecting energy generation. Voith has been a leading supplier of this technology since the early beginning, and continuously develops it further.

About the company

Voith sets standards in the energy, oil & gas, paper, raw materials and transport & automotive markets. Founded in 1867, Voith today has more than 20,000 employees and earns 4.3 billion euros in sales. It has locations in over 60 countries and is one of the largest family-owned companies in Europe.*

* Excluding the discontinued Division Voith Industrial Services.

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