

Lift enables wheelchair users to access Osnabrück registry office

Historic Weigh House is now accessible

BY SEBASTIAN STRICKER

At last! No more obstacles to weddings! The city of Osnabrück has made the entrance to the Weigh House on the market square accessible. The heavy wooden doors now open automatically, and with the help of a platform lift, wheelchair users are now also able to access the room used for wedding ceremonies in the historic building with ease.

Remodelling the historic building cost 90,000 euro and took three months to complete. The building (constructed in 1532), which is used by the registry office, is now completely accessible – just in time for wedding season. Over 600 wedding ceremonies are held in the Weigh House each year.

“A project close to the heart”

A platform lift has been installed, which is not only easy to operate, but also looks elegant. The platform lift can be completely lowered into the floor. A touch of a button is all that's required to access the foyer via the stairs. The Lord Mayor Wolfgang Griesert describes it as “elegant and discreet”.

Purchasing the lift had been “a labour of love” for him since reading about the difficulties posed by the Weigh House for mobility-impaired people in the newspaper “Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung” in November 2013. Back then, an 86-year-old woman risked missing her granddaughter's wedding when she was unable to climb the steps up to the mezzanine level, and it was unreasonable to expect anybody to carry both the frail lady and the incredibly heavy wheelchair.

Expensive compromise

“The story moved me. I think it's undignified to always have to rely on help from strangers”, said Mr Griesert on Tuesday at the official launch of the newly accessible registry office. Shortly after taking office, that is the reason why he got the city's own property and building management department to look for a solution. This was a problem the city previously thought couldn't be solved: in the past, any remodelling of the Weigh House had always been rejected on account of its listed status.

However, the installation of the “concealed stairlift” seems to have proven that the requirements posed by listed status can be fully reconciled with those of disabled people. Even if the city did have to dig deep into its pockets to do so. “Of course it's expensive”, concedes Mr Griesert. However, a



lift throughout the entire building, as was preferred by the Disability Forum, would have cost up to half a million euros and required substantial modifications to the building, which dates from the early modern period. Nevertheless, the rooms that attract the public have been made accessible, and the façade of the Weigh House has been preserved. In fact, it is hardly noticeable that the entire entrance area has grown as a result of the remodelling. The vestibule is now located considerably further back, and the stairs have also been moved to create space for the platform lift.

Perfect solution

How has the new installation been received by its users? Katrin Achberger from the Disability Forum expressed her delight after a trial run in front of the Lord Mayor. "A perfect solution", was the verdict of the paralysed wheelchair user



who suffers from congenital spastic quadriplegia. The equipment is visually discreet, simple to operate and also reliable. She particularly liked the quiet and smooth operation of the platform lift. "You don't even notice that you're on a lift."



LP50H

The LP50H model is the perfect choice for simple and discreet solutions. The LP50H is a platform lift with horizontal movement. The platform lift is recessed into the floor and blends in perfectly with its surroundings as a result. It is therefore particularly suitable for buildings and locations with listed status that require aesthetic solutions.

Use

The LP50H model is recessed into the floor in front of stairs and is designed for permanent installation indoors. When the platform lift is operated, the four safety edges are automatically raised. This prevents the user from rolling over the edge. When the platform reaches the upper level, the front safety edge is automatically lowered to enable the user to leave the platform unhindered. The covering of the platform can be customised, for example, with tiles, wood or marble.

Two models are available: the LP50H with horizontal movement and the LP50 which is solely a vertical platform lift.