



## County Derry staircase manufacturer transforms productivity with Staircon



**Summary:** Barry O’Kane’s staircase design and manufacturing business BFOK Contracts in Northern Ireland may be young but is growing faster than ever now that he has Staircon and a CNC router in place.

Staircon has eliminated the need for manual calculations and laborious AutoCAD drawings meaning that the firm can design, sell and then deliver staircases to its contractor and private customers faster, with dependable quality, and a turn-key ability to repeat manufacture staircase designs for volume orders.

Barry O’Kane is an entrepreneur building a business in County Derry in Northern Ireland and he is capitalising on demand for staircase manufacturing services for a thriving local contractor marketplace.

Barry’s business was founded in 2016 and grew steadily during its first two years, accelerating significantly in 2018 when he invested in technology to modernise the digital design, visualisation and manufacturing process. He chose Staircon software from Elecosoft alongside a CNC router and has transformed his productivity.

In planning this change, Barry visited the W Show, one of the UK’s largest woodworking events, where he met with the Elecosoft team and was introduced to Staircon. It wasn’t

the only software he considered but he recognised that Staircon was the best choice. Barry secured his CNC router in a matter of weeks after the show and was then able to complete the set-up: “Once I had my CNC router in place everything unfolded very fast. I contacted Elecosoft and they visited quickly after that and got us up and running on Staircon.”

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## Complex calculations made easy

The ability to speed up complex staircase design is one of the most predominant benefits Barry has experienced with Staircon. He explained that: “Many of the stairs we make are winding and that involves a lot of calculating. I used to spend every night drawing out designs, which was very labour intensive. With Staircon I now spend a quarter of the time I used to spend drawing out stairs and steps in AutoCAD. Now I just have to spend one hour a day doing this.”

Staircon has also simplified the complicated process of design and material calculations. He continued: “Staircon makes it simple. All the calculations I was doing myself before can now be generated in Staircon, from the height of the rise and number of risers to the length of the goings, which all determines the pitch of the staircase. Doing it this way means there’s less chance of mistakes or errors than when I was working them all out manually.”

## Unlocking time for sales

One of the advantages of automating time-consuming activities was that Barry freed up time to develop his business.

“With the software in place, I found I was able to find more time to develop the private staircase side of the business. It meant I had time to get talking to them more – and selling more. As I get more and more confident with Staircon I’ve started to use the functionality to show staircase designs in 3D. They can see it, understand what they are getting, and



really know whether they like it or not. Plus, if they want to make a change, such as to the colour, I can take that and show it on the 3D model.”

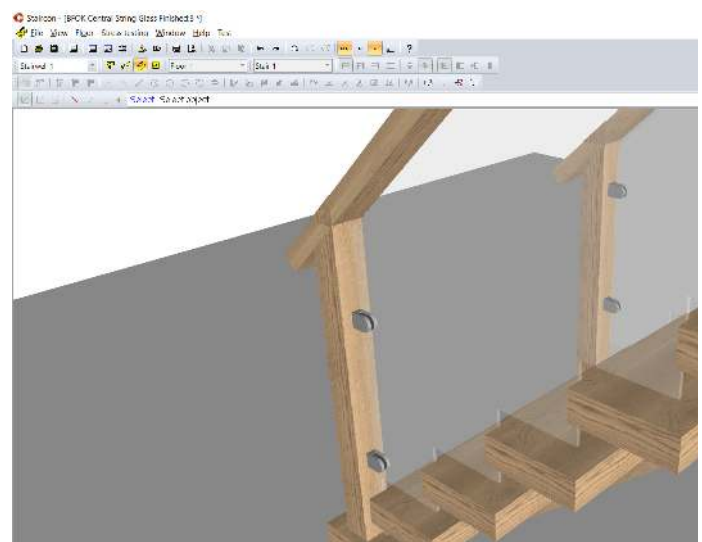
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## Repeatable quality production

The production volumes have steadily increased as design efficiency has grown. One other factor in this has been the ability for Barry’s firm to offer and deliver dependable quality for volume orders. He commented: “With Staircon we can have one design but repeat manufacturing as much as we need. Our turnover and production in the past year has tripled, and we are now turning out around 20 flights per week. Before we had Staircon and the CNC capability we could really only generate one flight per day. Effectively it has meant we can do three times as much work, and only work half as hard.”

Reflecting on what Staircon has helped bring about, Barry is also appreciative of the significant support for quality of manufacture: “Perhaps the main advantage of doing it this way is the quality of workmanship. Driving machine production using Staircon delivers quality that is unbelievable compared to what can be done by hand. The quality and consistency is the same every time. If a joiner makes a set of stairs, they can only ever be as good as the joiner, and often affected by how they’re feeling that day. With the help of Staircon we deliver a high-quality product every time.”

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## More information

Please call us on **+44 (0) 1844 261 700** or email [info@elecosoft.com](mailto:info@elecosoft.com)