Andrew Marr: Prime Minister, are you now strong enough to announce a proper reshuffle?

Theresa May: Well, it’s no prizes for guessing, Andrew, that obviously Damian Green’s departure before Christmas means that some changes do have to be made and I will be making some changes. But much though you would love me to talk about the reshuffle in detail here on the BBC, I’m afraid I won’t be doing that.

AM: But can you at least tell us, is it going to be quite soon?

TM: It will be soon, yes.

AM: All right, we’ve got that at least. Can I ask you about one of the big stories around at the moment, the black cab taxi rapist, John Worboys’ release. Do you understand why so many people up and down the country are outraged about this?

TM: I do, absolutely and in fact I know somebody who was one of his victims and who was not contacted and first heard of what was happening through the – through the media. So I recognise why people are so concerned about this and that’s why I think it’s right. Obviously the Parole Board operates independently, but I think it’s right that we as a government are saying that we should look at the question of openness and that we should look at this whole issue too of how victims are kept in touch with what is – with what is happening. So the Secretary of State for Justice is going to be doing exactly that.

AM: Are you going to be looking again at the whole question of these decisions being taken by the Parole Board in secret?
Because the public would like to know why this man is being released, are there any justifications for it?

TM: Well I think this question of openness is exactly one of the issues that we have to look at and, as I say, the Parole Board has –

AM: What's your instinct?

TM: Well my instinct is that people do want to know more about why decisions are taken in the way that they’re taken. But look, let’s look at this properly and that is exactly what we’re going to do as a government but I fully recognise why people are concerned about this.

AM: Two of the victims had an appalling experience at the hands of the Metropolitan Police. They felt they were not being taken seriously and they took the police to court back in 2014 and they won their case. But since then they have been pursued by the police, backed by your government, all the way up to the Supreme Court. That’s surely wrong?

TM: Well look, I’m not going to comment on individual cases, but obviously when these things are a matter for the courts it’s for the courts to determine what is – what is right. I think what’s important is when we look at issues of this sort in the round we want to ensure that victims feel confident enough to come forward so that they feel confident that the police will take action and confident that justice – that they will get justice.

AM: But these victims have been mocked and mistreated. You’re always on the side of the victims. In this case, given what they’ve been through, given they’re now at the Supreme Court, isn’t it right just simply to drop the case and let them get on with their lives?
TM: Well look, this is an issue that is before the courts, Andrew, but what I recognise is the importance - and this is why you say I’ve talked about victims in the past and absolutely, because I think these sorts of issues, these sorts of crimes that are being committed are ones where all too often people have not felt able to come forward because they’ve been concerned about whether or not they would get justice. That’s why it’s so important that we ensure that we give people the confidence to be able to report these crimes, make these allegations for them to be properly investigated and then the right and proper action to be taken. Now in this case, if I may say, as we’re saying, we’ve got to a situation where it’s got to another stage in relation to the release of the individual and people are asking, as you say, why is it that this has happened and why is it that victims weren’t informed about this because there are victims. As I say I know someone who wasn’t told about this, so it’s important that we look at that and say actually should we be doing this in a different way?

AM: If necessary will we see legislative change on this?

TM: Well we’ll look – we will look at what is necessary, yes. The Secretary for Justice, the Justice Department will be looking at that over the next couple of months, they’ll be asking the question do we need to do things in a different way, and whatever the answer is we’ll do what is necessary.

AM: Can I turn to another really big story at the moment. I’ve seen winter crises come and go over many, many years as a reporter. I don’t remember one quite like this in the NHS. 55,000 operations cancelled in a single month. A return to mixed sex wards and all the rest of it. Can you remember when the crisis was as bad as this?
TM: Well look, if we look at what has happened in the NHS and what is happening in the NHS of course, as you say, there are winter pressures every - every year. We've actually –

AM: But not as bad as this. This is worse, isn’t it?

TM: The NHS has actually been better prepared for this winter pressures than it has been before. The – you mentioned operations being postponed. That was part of the plan. Of course we want to ensure that those operations can be reinstated as soon as possible, but it’s about making sure that those who most urgently need care are able to get that treatment when they need it. But what I also know, and I visited Frimley Park Hospital only a few days ago, but I also know is that our NHS staff have been doing a fantastic job. They do that day in and day out.

AM: They do, but –

TM: But they have been working really hard over these – this time of winter pressure and really delivering for people and doing a fantastic job.

AM: Sure, but Prime Minister, you say there’s a plan. Let me tell you about Leah Butler Smith who was in an ambulance in a hospital outside Essex with her mother who was having a stroke. She was – they were in the – in the ambulance for an hour and then went into the hospital for a further four hours before they saw a doctor. Her mother was going in and out of consciousness. If I’d been waiting for five hours before I’d seen a doctor after my stroke I would not be here talking to you. This is about life and death and up and down the country people are having horrendous experiences of the NHS. Where they say there’s a plan or not there is a real, real problem. What would you say to Leah Butler Smith and her mother?

TM: Well obviously you’ve raised an individual case with me which I haven’t seen the details of and I – I recognise that people have
concerns if they have experience of that sort. If we look at what is happening across the NHS what we see is that actually the NHS is delivering for more people, it is treating more people and more people are being seen within the four hours every day than has been in the – a few years ago. But of course nothing’s perfect and there is more for us to do. We have planned for the winter pressures this year. We did put some more money in and there has been planning and hospitals have been dealing with it in different ways. As I say, when I met staff at Frimley Park they were very clear about how – about what they’d been doing and I saw dedication, the dedication of our NHS staff which is so important to us all.

AM: But given what’s happened you have apologised. What have you said sorry for?

TM: What I have said was that I was apologising for the fact that of course as we’ve seen some operations have been postponed and some people have been delayed in being admitted to – to hospital. Now, if you look across the NHS, experience is different. Experience is different from hospital to hospital as to what is – what is happening. There are some hospitals where very few operations have been cancelled. What we –

AM: And there are some where occupancy is 99.9%. Way above what is concerned to be safe.

TM: And what we need to do is to ensure that in addition to the work that we’re doing, for putting extra funding into the NHS that we are working to see where it is the case that hospitals have been perhaps being able to cope better than others. What is it that’s enabled them to do that? What can we learn from this for the future?
AM: You say you’ve put the money in but according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies this is the tightest spending squeeze in the history of the NHS. Are you saying sorry for that?

TM: We have put extra money into the NHS. We have been doing that you know, year in year out. We look –
AM: Not nearly enough clearly.
TM: Well year in and year out we look at the funding for the National Health Service and what we’ve done is consistently where we felt it did need more funding we have put more funding into it. We’ve put some – we put some extra money in for the coping with the winter pressures. We’ve also of course in the Budget in November announced that for the next couple of years there will be extra money, further money going into the National Health Service, so we look at what is needed and we recognise that. We also need to ensure that we’re seeing you know, across the whole of the NHS the best possible practice. We, you know – we should be proud of the fact that our NHS has been named as the safest and best health care system in the world. Is there more we can do? Yes, of course there is and that’s what the government will be doing.

AM: The tightest funding squeeze in the history of the NHS. Six billion pounds out of the Social Care budget since 2010, which is why there are so many people in hospital beds at the moment and an NHS reorganisation under Andrew Lansley described by your own former advisor Nick Timothy, as being a disaster. Creating bureaucracy and destroying accountability. Surely those are the things you should be apologising for?

TM: Well if you look at the social care system we have recognised the pressure that is put on the NHS and the pressure – increased pressure on the social care system because of the ageing population. And what we see –
AM: But you haven’t done anything about it. I’m sorry.
TM: Well yes, we have done something about it, Andrew. I’m sorry, you’re wrong in that. We have put extra funding into the social care system and we have worked with hospitals and with local authorities to identify how we can reduce those delayed discharges. I.e. patients being kept in hospital when they shouldn’t be.

AM: I’m sorry, but you take £6 billion out from the NHS, from the local authorities and you put a small amount of money back in. That is not solving the problem. That is putting a small sticking plaster on a wound that you have created.

TM: No. The social care - I’ve always said and I’ve said for some time now – that if we look at the social care system we need to identify – there’s a short term answer, there’s a medium term answer and a longer term answer. Short term we’ve put extra money in. Medium term we need to ensure that best practice is being undertaken across the whole of the system.

AM: Right.

TM: So there are some areas where you will see very few delayed discharges, others where you’ll see a higher number. What we’ve done in the winter preparedness is worked on that and we’ve actually seen the number of delayed discharges – that’s elderly people being kept in hospital when they don’t need to be – coming down. Longer term we need a sustainable solution for our social care system –

AM: And that’s what you’re looking at?

TM: - and that’s what we’re working on.

AM: Okay, now every single second winter or every winter, depending on when you’re looking at it there is a winter NHS crisis. It goes on and on and on and people like me say where is more money and people like you say well here’s a bit more money and then in a few years’ time there is another crisis. Surely the
NHS needs a better long term solution. Jeremy Hunt says there needs to be a ten year funding plan for the NHS. Do you agree with him?

TM: Well we’ve put – of course what we’re operating on at the moment is the five year forward view for the NHS which is the forward view that the NHS themselves came forward with. They brought those proposals together.

AM: Not quite a ten year plan, but they say there’s not enough money coming in.

TM: Well, and we have put the money in. We have put money in that was asked for for that review and we’ve actually put some extra money in in the spring statement and the Budget last – last year to deal with this.

AM: A lot of the brightest, sorry. A lot of the brightest Conservatives, best informed Conservatives in parliament on this subject, people like Sarah Wollaston, Oliver Letwin are now talking about the need for an earmarked NHS tax of some kind to get away from this endless cycle of crises and patchwork money going in and another crisis and another crisis and so forth. Is it not time to look bravely and radically at the funding of the NHS?

TM: Well what we do when we look at the money to go into the NHS – this isn’t an issue of stopgaps here and there. Actually every year when we produce budgets we look at what funding is necessary for the NHS. We look at what changes need to be made to ensure that money is being spent as effectively as possible. Some really interesting innovations being introduced by some – AM: That’s quite a long way of saying no, isn’t it?

TM: Well it’s quite – but there’s quite a lot of innovation.
AM: No, no.
TM: You keep talking about the money but actually what you also need to look at is what – how the NHS works. How it – how it operates. What I saw in the hospital I visited in the last few days, some really interesting innovations. They’ve done a huge amount of work with local GPs -
AM: Okay.
TM: - to actually reduce the number of elderly people that need to be in hospital. Now that’s good for those elderly people. It’s good for the beds they’re releasing.
AM: of course it is, but it goes back to the £6 billion cut in social care budgets since the Conservatives came into power.

TM: No. No, I’m sorry, it doesn’t.
AM: it does.
TM: Actually what that is about is about the hospital and GPs working together to ensure that they are helping to keep elderly people out of hospital. It’s better for the –
AM: We want everybody to work together, I agree with that.

TM: It’s better for the elderly people. It releases beds for those who have more need for them.

12:48
AM: Can I move onto another big problem which is railways. We’re in Maidenhead, in Maidenhead it’s an extra £700 for your ticket to London since 2010. A heck of a lot of money. Across the country commuters are looking at the railway system saying we’re paying through the nose, the rises get bigger and bigger and bigger and the service is getting worse and worse. If this is privatisation I want nothing to do with it.

TM: Well what we’ve seen on the railways of course is that the regulated fares are kept - rises in the regulated fares are kept to inflation and every – for every pound that somebody pays on a ticket in the railways, 97p of that goes back into investment in the
railways. We've seen – we saw between – just you know, since privatisation usage of the railways has doubled and we have seen the biggest investments since Victorian times in our railways. I want to see you know – a lot of people rely on our railways, we want to see good service on our railways, but that does mean that investment is needed.

AM: Meanwhile lots of people
TM: as I say
AM: - as I say are paying through the nose, 5.5% increases. They have – there’s nothing they can do about it. They are a captive audience, they have to pay that money, but if you are running one of the big companies, running the railways, if you’re Richard Branson or Brian Souter at Stagecoach, and you sign a solemn pledge which means that you’re going to pay 3.3 billion pounds to the British tax payer in return for running a franchise and things don’t go as you hope you can go back to your government and renegotiate and get away with it. It’s one law for the people who are actually paying for the tickets and another people running the services.

TM: No, we’re still seeing though that – we’re still seeing money being paid into the government and what we see, as I say –
AM: Okay.
TM: - is on our railways -
AM: If you say that, if you say that can you give us a guarantee that the British taxpayer is going to get that £3.3 billion from Stagecoach and Virgin for the East Coast line?

TM: Virgin and Stagecoach are still paying money to the government for the East Coast –
AM: That’s not a yes.
TM: - for the East Coast line. But let’s just look – the point you’re making –
AM: So the answer is no to that. Actually – Lord Adonis is right. The taxpayer has lost out on this deal in big terms and it provides an incentive for other companies to do the same thing.

TM: No, what I see when I look across the railways is railway companies that are wanting to provide a good service for their customers. You talk about the Maidenhead line. You know how much somebody in my own constituency now has to pay for their – for their season ticket. Actually now they are soon going to be able to have the opportunity of not only using the Great Western trains, but also using Crossrail. Now that’s a huge investment in our railways.

AM: All right, okay.

TM: That’s an improvement in service for many people. That’s a choice for passengers that they can have. That’s –

AM: let me move slightly – okay

TM: why we’ve seen passenger usage doubling under privatisation.

AM: Let me move slightly further north in England to – you’ve got a 25 year plan for the environment and part of that is a big new northern forest. Can you explain a little bit about the thinking behind that and what it involves?

TM: I’ll talk about the forest in a minute but if I can just say why it’s important I think. People often think about environment issues and wonder whether the government can have an impact on that. If you just look at one thing that we’ve done, in 2015 we introduced the 5p charge on carrier bags, on plastic bags. Actually we now see 9 billion fewer plastic bags being used.

AM: Some villages are banning them altogether.
THERESA MAY

TM: And so this is a difference. It’s making a real difference. We want to do the same in relation to single plastic use. Nobody who watched Blue Planet will doubt the need for us to do something.

AM: Filthy oceans, yes.

TM: Fantastic programme by the BBC. But the environment is a huge variety of things and that’s why we are putting £5.7 million into what is going to be a new national forest, 120 miles from Bradford, Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool giving that environment, that habitat for wildlife, but also areas for people to go and enjoy.

AM: You say this is going to happen. Are we sure these trees are actually going to be planted, because the Conservatives offered, or said they were going to plant 11 million trees in the manifesto and they haven’t been planted.

TM: Well we’re putting money in and this national forest we will be developing that. We will be ensuring – it’s going to take time to plant the millions of trees that will be needed in order to develop this national forest, so this is not a short term thing that’s going to happen but the commitment is there.

AM: You pride yourself on being somebody that understands the countryside and you’ve always been a staunch supporter of fox hunting and you have promised a free vote on returning fox hunting to the country during this parliament. Have you changed your mind?

TM: Well, I’ve not changed my personal view, I’ve never fox hunted as it – as it happens, but if you look back –

AM: But you support fox hunting?

TM: - but if you look at – I’ve not changed my view on that but if I look back at what – the messages that we got from the election,
one of the clear messages we got was a number of areas in which people were concerned about what we were proposing. So just as we’ve looked at issues on school funding, on tuition fees, on housing and we’re taking forward approaches in relation to that, on this issue of fox hunting what I can say is that there won’t be a vote during this parliament.

AM: This sounds, if I may say so Prime Minister, just a little bit cynical. If I was a fox hunter I’d think here is somebody who supports fox hunting who said they were going to bring fox hunting back and because you’ve looked at the numbers when it come to the election you’re going to go back on your word.

TM: No, as I’ve said, my own view hasn’t changed but as Prime Minister my job isn’t just about what I think about something, it’s actually about looking at what the view of the country is. I think there was a clear message about that and that’s why I say there won’t be a vote on fox hunting during this parliament.

18:40
AM: Let’s move on to Brexit. Do you think we’re going to get a deal this year?

TM: Well I think what we saw at the end of last year with the sufficient progress on the first stage of negotiations was a real spirit of cooperation between the UK and Europe wanting to ensure that we get a deal that is in everybody’s best interests. So the timetable that we’ve now got going forward of course with that date of 29th of March 2019, when we’ll be leaving –

AM: Quite close.
TM: - when we’ll be leaving the European Union, the first stage in that will be looking in more detail at the implementation period. It was important for business and for business confidence that there’s agreement that should – period should take place. We now have to look at the detail of that and the expectation and
everybody’s working to have that detail by the end of March in 2018 is then – AM: Which really means getting a deal this year.

TM: It means – it then means the work on the withdrawal agreement before the end of the year and I’ve been very clear that by the time we leave the European Union we want to have agreed what the future relationship between us and the European Union is going to be.

AM: Do you think that MPs – I’m sorry. Do you think that MPs are going to get a vote on our future relationship with the EU in parliament this year?

TM: There will be – certainly be a meaningful vote. There’s going to be lots of votes for MPs on different aspects - AM: yeah but the big one I mean.

TM: - on different aspects of this and of course crucially what the first thing that if you like in timetable terms that MPs will be looking at is the detail of the withdrawal agreement. We will – we’ve said to MPs they will have a vote on that. They will also of course be then voting on the legislation necessary to bring both the withdrawal agreement and the implementation period into – AM: This – this year?

TM: -into place.

AM: This year?

TM: Well the intention is that and Michel Barnier himself has said he wants that agreed by October of this year so that that can then go to the European Parliament which has to look at it and we’ve said we want our parliament to vote before the European Parliament does.

AM: When you’re asked about our eventual relationship you have a series of formulas you see, so it’s going to be a very good relationship, it’s going to be bespoke and so forth, which doesn’t
really mean a lot to people. When I asked David Davis about it he said he wanted Canada, plus, plus, plus. What does that mean?

TM: Well it means that what we want is our own free trade agreement with the European Union. Now we start off from a different position from other countries and start negotiating –

AM: And from Canada, yeah.

TM: and from Canada. Canada hadn’t – didn’t have a relationship with the EU that we have because we operate on the same basis at the moment, but we –

AM: But also 80% of our economy is service based, particularly financial services, so would it be a Canada plus a special deal for the City? Would it be – would that be the kind of deal that would appeal to you?

TM: Well it would be a free trade agreement which we want to cover both goods and services and what I want to do is to ensure that as we look at the Brexit deal going forward it’s important we recognise why people voted to leave the European Union here in the UK. Some of that was about free movement and an end to free movement. Some of it actually was about the issue of the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice and people wanting control, but at the same time I think people still want to have a good economic relationship with the European Union, so we want as frictionless and tariff-free a trading relationship with the European Union as possible and that’s what we mean when we talk about having a free trade agreement which isn’t modelled on somebody else’s agreement, but is actually the right one for the UK.

AM: Staying briefly with foreign affairs you’ve seen a lot of Donald Trump one way or another. Child or stable genius?
TM: I do – obviously I’ve worked with President Trump on a number of issues as we continue to work with the United States on a number of issues. President Trump I think –

AM: What do you make of him?

TM: What I make of him is somebody who is taking decisions on what he believes is in the best interests of the United States. You know, the United Kingdom government and I will take decisions here on what we believe is in the best interests of the UK.

AM: In the States there are quite serious questions being raised by some people about his mental state. Do you think they’re serious?

TM: No. As I say when I deal with President Trump what I see is somebody who is committed to ensuring that he is taking decisions in the best interests of the United States.

AM: And he’s coming to this country?

TM: He will be coming to this country.

AM: Can I read to you something you said in your New Year Message. You said that in 2018 ‘everyone has a right to be treated with respect. That means a public sphere in which debate is constructive and courteous and where we treat each other with decency.’ In that context do you think it was right to appoint Toby Young to the new students body given what he said about being a porn addict and given things he has said repeatedly on twitter about women’s breasts?

TM: Well, first of all Toby Young has done exceedingly good work in relation to free schools. And that’s what led to him being appointed to the office for students. When he was appointed I was not aware of these comments that he had made. Frankly I’m
not at all impressed by those comments. He’s now in public office and as far as I’m concerned if he was to continue to use that sort of language and talk in that sort of way he would no longer be in public office.

AM: But for the time being he’s apologised and from your point of view that’s enough. He can carry on?

TM: He’s apologised, but as I say if he – if he continues to talk and use this sort of language then he will no longer be in public office.

AM: Last time we were in this hotel I asked you whether there would be a snap election. You said, no there won’t be and then there was. Slightly in that context can I ask you – I started off by saying that you’re a stronger position that you were a year ago or less than a year ago, are you in such a strong position you can now say to us clearly that you will fight the next General Election?

TM: Well, Andrew, I’ve been asked that before and I’ve said you know I’m not a quitter. I’m in this for the long term and the reason I make –

AM: But does that mean you’ll fight the next election?

TM: I’ve said that before. I’ve said that I want to fight that.

AM: So you will?

TM: Obviously I serve as long as people want me to serve.

Ends