ANDREW MARR:
Well apart from David Cameron obviously the big winner on election night was the SNP Leader and Scotland’s First Minister Nicola Sturgeon. She wasn’t standing for Westminster herself, of course, but her party is sending 56 MPs back to the House of Commons behind me. The SNP won all but 3 of the seats in Scotland – a staggering result, which she says will ensure that Scotland’s voice is heard loud and clear. Nicola Sturgeon has already been talking to the Prime Minister by phone and no doubt they’ll be meeting soon. The First Minister is with me now. Welcome.

NICOLA STURGEON:
Good morning, Andrew.

ANDREW MARR:
How was your phone call?

NICOLA STURGEON:
It was very courteous. It was a brief phone call, as you would expect, just a few hours after the final result was confirmed. I congratulated him. I don’t think I’m giving away any state secrets here when I say I would have preferred David Cameron not to
continue as Prime Minister, but he won the election. I congratulated him on that. He congratulated the SNP on our success. We agreed to meet as soon as possible. There are big issues for us to discuss. The key point I wanted to make to him, and did make to him, was this one: he cannot act now as if it’s business as usual in Scotland. Scotland voted overwhelmingly for change and I think that has to be heeded.

**ANDREW MARR:**
You said one thing that I didn’t really understand in the wake of the victory, which is that this was a vote to stop austerity taking place across the UK. You don’t have the votes to do that. You can’t do that, can you?

**NICOLA STURGEON:**
Well, we put ending austerity as the number one priority in our manifesto and when I launched the SNP manifesto, which is about three weeks ago now, I was very explicit that that was the top priority. Fifty per cent of people in Scotland voted for that manifesto with that commitment to end austerity. Now that can’t simply be ignored.

**ANDREW MARR:**
(over) Can’t it?

**NICOLA STURGEON:**
What we said in our manifesto, which is what people in Scotland voted for comprehensively, you know has to be listened to. And okay there are discussions to be had and the detail of those discussions to be got into, but if David Cameron thinks – and I’m not saying he does – but if he thinks he can just carry on as if nothing happened in Scotland on Thursday, then he’s wrong.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Well, but on the austerity issue, I mean the vast majority of M… the overall majority of MPs elected into the House of Commons across the UK are from the anti-austerity party. They’re the ones with the votes. There’s nothing that you could do in the House of Commons to prevent austerity happening …
NICOLA STURGEON:
Well Sco…

ANDREW MARR:
… nothing at all. You haven’t got the numbers.

NICOLA STURGEON:
Well Scotland clearly doesn’t want austerity to continue and there are discussions we’re required to have about the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government’s budget, discussions that I will want to have about £12 billion of welfare cuts that David Cameron didn’t specify during the election that will hit disabled people. So these are … you know these are discussions we need to have and the will of the Scottish people has to be listened to. I think it’s likely - you know given that Labour are entering a period of introspection, questioning their, you know, very purpose in life - the SNP is going to be the principal opposition to the Conservatives …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) The voice.

NICOLA STURGEON:
… and a voice.

ANDREW MARR:
All I’m saying, you can’t stop him doing what he wants now actually.

NICOLA STURGEON:
Well we’ll seek to build alliances with others and we will seek to make sure that those issues that we put at the heart of the campaign go to the heart of the Westminster agenda. And you know during the campaign, I was at pains to hold out a hand of friendship to people across the rest of the UK, and I know there are people in England, Wales and Northern Ireland who will be as disappointed as people in Scotland that we’re looking at a majority Conservative Government. We can be a voice for them as the opposition to David Cameron in government.
ANDREW MARR:
But in the end a majority is a majority is a majority.

NICOLA STURGEON:
Yeah it’s a slender majority and 56 SNP MPs will be there to make Scotland’s voice heard, but also to stand up for the progressive politics that we very deliberately put at the heart of our campaign.

ANDREW MARR:
And in terms of the Scottish budget, it’s perfectly clear a lot of Conservative MPs – and you heard David Davis perhaps just now – saying look we’re going to give you full fiscal autonomy. If you want to end austerity, you want higher public spending in Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, that’s absolutely fine, but you can do it by raising money on the backs of Scottish taxpayers alone. That is their proposition to you.

NICOLA STURGEON:
Well you know if they think giving Scotland responsibility and power is some kind of threat to the SNP, then they don’t understand much about the SNP.

ANDREW MARR:
So you’d say yes to that, would you?

NICOLA STURGEON:
Well our manifesto set out very clearly that we would want to move to full fiscal responsibility. You know clearly that will take a number of years to implement. What we’re arguing for and what we will argue for is priority devolution of powers over business taxes, employment, the minimum wage, welfare, because these are the levers we need to grow our economy faster, to get more people into work …

ANDREW MARR:
Right.

NICOLA STURGEON:
… paying taxes and lifting people out of poverty.
ANDREW MARR:  
So …

NICOLA STURGEON:  
Interestingly, the final point I would make here is, David Cameron didn’t give me any indication that he wanted to move beyond the current Smith Commission proposals. I think he has to and that clearly is one of the things we’re going to have to discuss.

ANDREW MARR:  
I think a lot of people think he has to do that. But if he says to you okay, here are all the lever… here are the levers you want, but in return it’s the end of the Barnett formula, it’s the end of any cross-subsidy, we are moving to full fiscal autonomy for Scotland within two years …

NICOLA STURGEON:  
Well we …

ANDREW MARR:  
… you’d say that’s a good deal?

NICOLA STURGEON:  
Well we would have to make sure that was a good deal because one of the issues around full fiscal autonomy would be a fiscal agreement between … a fiscal framework between the Scottish Government and the UK Government, and there would be some issues in that that it would be the responsibility of the Scottish Government and our MPs down in the House of Commons to make sure we got a good deal. There would be questions about how much Scotland contributed to continued reserved responsibilities like defence, how much we contributed to debt interest payments. So you know there are clearly some big discussions to be had there. Now we haven’t got into the detail of those discussions. My starting point though is that Scotland’s voice has to be heard and it is the job now of the MPs we’ve elected to this place to make sure that happens.

ANDREW MARR:
And you’re the leader not of course of the Scottish Nationalist Party but of the Scottish National Party …

NICOLA STURGEON:
Absolutely.

ANDREW MARR:
… and some people will say that actually the most comfortable thing for Scotland for quite a few years ahead would be home rule all round, would be a new federal settlement for Britain, and that actually might be a better option than early independence.

NICOLA STURGEON:
Well you know we had the independence referendum last year and I campaigned very hard for a Yes vote, as you saw. Scotland didn’t vote yes in the referendum. There’s not another referendum you know on the immediate horizon, so what we have to do now is make sure we get the best deal for Scotland within the Westminster system, make sure Scotland’s voice is heard, and also play a constructive role in that system. I’m very conscious, as I said a moment ago, that we will be perhaps the principal and most effective opposition to the Tories in the House of Commons. That gives us the responsibility to speak up for progressive politics on behalf of people not just in Scotland but right across these islands.

ANDREW MARR
But a sort of home rule all round federal Britain might suit a lot of people for quite a long time to come.

NICOLA STURGEON:
Well I know that I want more powers for Scotland. You know it’s not for me to dictate to other parts of the UK - whether that’s regions of England or Wales – what the right settlement for them might be, but you know the more power that is decentralised out of this place behind us here perhaps the better for everybody across the UK.
ANDREW MARR:
Well let’s talk about independence because Alex Salmond said very clearly yesterday, I think, that this was a stepping stone to independence, this vote. Do you agree with him?

NICOLA STURGEON:
What Alex said – and I don’t think it’s a particularly controversial statement – is that he thinks Scotland will become an independent country. I think Scotland will become an independent country one day. He said he thinks it will be in his lifetime. I hope that’s the case.

ANDREW MARR:
But do you think this general election campaign …

NICOLA STURGEON:
(over) No.

ANDREW MARR:
… has moved Scotland further? You don’t?

NICOLA STURGEON:
(over) No this general election campaign – and there’s no disagreement between Alex and I on this – this general election campaign was not about independence. I said that repeatedly, I said it consistently, and I said expressly to people in Scotland that if they voted SNP – and half of the Scottish population did – I would not take that as an endorsement of independence. I stick to that position.

ANDREW MARR:
So that’s a personal integrity thing because Alex Salmond did say he thought it ... it did move Scotland further after the result, and then people said, aha, they’re changing their tune already.

NICOLA STURGEON:
(over) Well Scotland … No well let me … None of us are changing our tune. I’m a
great believer in what you say before an election should be what you say after an
election. I said and I said it directly to people - and many people who voted no for
independence in the referendum, who would vote no if the referendum was tomorrow,
voted SNP on Thursday - now I’ve got a responsibility to make sure that we represent
all of them, but also that we represent those who didn’t vote for us and seek to win
their trust. You said our name is the Scottish National Party and you’re absolutely
right about that. As First Minister, as Leader of the SNP, I’ve got responsibility to try
to unite Scotland and I’m determined that I do that.

ANDREW MARR:
Now looking ahead, one of the big issues of course is Europe. You said again during
the election campaign that it would have to be something pretty big to persuade you to
put independence, an independence referendum back on the 2016 Holyrood
manifesto. Can I take it that that would have to be something really cataclysmic, not
on the horizon, unlikely to happen?

NICOLA STURGEON:
Well you know the one example I’ve used … I think the last time we spoke, I said I’m
not going to give you a list because I cannot see into the future. It would have to be
something significant and material. The example I have used is if there was an in/out
referendum - and clearly with a majority Tory Government that must be on the
horizon – and Scotland voted to stay in the EU and the rest of the UK voted to come
out, you know I think there would be significant opinion in Scotland that said we had
to relook at the issue of independence. But I actually …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) So to be clear … I’m sorry …

NICOLA STURGEON:
(over) … want to have an arrangement to stop that happening.

ANDREW MARR:
I’m sorry to press you on this, but to be clear. Failing to get what you want on
austerity with David Cameron in those negotiations wouldn’t be a cataclysmic event
sufficient to put an independence referendum back on the table?

NICOLA STURGEON:
The example I've used is one … that gives you some idea of what I’m talking about. But clearly we’re some distance away from finalising our 2016 manifesto. When we do people will be able to scrutinise it and decide whether to vote for the SNP on the strength of that. The point I was going to go on to make about Europe is I actually want to have an arrangement if there is an in/out referendum, which I don’t want there to be, that would avoid the scenario that I’m talking about. Let’s have that double majority so that each of the four constituent parts of the UK …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) That’s what you’re fighting for, yes.

NICOLA STURGEON:
… would have to vote to come out before that happened.

ANDREW MARR:
I’ve been popping in and out of Scotland, I haven’t been there the whole time the last few weeks, but it has felt more like a national revolution, an extraordinary upsurge, than politics as usual. My question is: you’ve got 100,000 new members in the SNP…

NICOLA STURGEON:
A hundred and ten thousand now, I think.

ANDREW MARR:
A hundred and ten thousand …

NICOLA STURGEON:
Yes. (laughs)

ANDREW MARR:
... I beg your pardon, new members - wow, changes every day – and massive numbers of voters who voted SNP for the first time in the hope of real change, big change. Can
you control your party?

NICOLA STURGEON:
Yes.

ANDREW MARR
Okay, that’s a very firm yes.

NICOLA STURGEON:
No the SNP is a party that is much bigger than it was. It is enthusiastic, it is absolutely passionate about politics and making Scotland a better place. It’s also pragmatic and understands that we’ve got a responsibility to represent all of Scotland. I have no concerns about that at all. What is wonderful – and it’s not just about the SNP, it’s about Scotland as a whole – that one of the great legacies of the referendum campaign is that we have a population that is interested in, engaged with and enthused about politics, and other countries I’m sure would give their eye teeth for that.

ANDREW MARR:
We’re going to have lots and lots of big political discussions down here over the next five years.

NICOLA STURGEON:
I look forward to them.

ANDREW MARR:
Who am I going to be talking to as the main voice of the SNP?

NICOLA STURGEON:
I’m the Leader of the SNP, so I hope we’ll be talking many times. But I also hope many of my colleagues will be sitting in this chair or the one in your usual studio on many occasions. We’re the third biggest party in this place now, so I hope you’ll be talking to lots of us.

ANDREW MARR:
We’ve noticed. Nicola Sturgeon, for now thank you very much indeed for joining us.

NICOLA STURGEON:
Thank you.

INTERVIEW ENDS