ANDREW MARR:

Mr President, very nice to see you again. Thank you for that very long discussion. We talked at great length about gay rights but I still don’t understand completely your own view. If I was our most prominent actor, Sir Ian McKellen, and I was saying… if he was standing here and said “Do you have a personal problem with gay people? Are you happy to work closely with gay people? Do you feel that gay people are being discriminated against in Russia?” what would you tell him?

VLADIMIR PUTIN:

If you want my personal attitude, I would tell you that I don’t care about a person’s orientation and I myself know some people who are gay. We are on friendly terms. I’m not prejudiced in any way.
ANDREW MARR:

And if Sir Elton John or Sir Ian McKellen arrived, would you be prepared to talk to them about this?

VLADIMIR PUTIN:

Yes, of course. I would definitely talk to them and I’ve honoured several members of the gay community in this country, but for their personal achievements regardless of their sexual orientation.

ANDREW MARR:

I’ll send the message back. This area reminds me very much of Scotland at times – I’m from Scotland – and in the United Kingdom we are facing a referendum this year where the Scots are going to vote as to whether to leave the UK. Now, I know there’s a lot of movement around the world for historic, old countries to leave other countries, a secessionist mood if you like, and I just wondered what message you might have to David Cameron in this very big year for Britain.

VLADIMIR PUTIN:

It’s not a matter for Russia. It’s a domestic issue for the United Kingdom. Any people has a right to self-determination and now in Europe the process of diluting national sovereignty in the framework of a united Europe is more accepted. But I believe one should not forget that being part of a single, strong state has some advantages and one should not overlook this. But it’s a choice for each and every people according to their own circumstances.

ANDREW MARR:

Perhaps you could invite the Scots to join your new customs union?
VLADIMIR PUTIN:

I wouldn’t rule that out.

ANDREW MARR:

Thank you very much Mr President.

INTERVIEW ENDS