AM: Today what is the point of UKIP?

PN: Well, we're going into this election with clear water between ourselves and the other political parties. We're the only party which is committed to cutting foreign aid and putting that money into the NHS and social care. We're the only party which is truly committed to cutting immigration. And indeed of course we have to be the guard dogs of Brexit, because I fear once this election's over and Theresa May comes back with a whopping majority that she will begin to backslide, and that's why it's important that UKIP is there to ensure that we get the Brexit that we voted for on June 23rd.

AM: Because you clearly, as you know, had a terrible night on the local elections, you lost every but one of the council seats you were defending. You've got no MPs. You've got a few Welsh Assembly members left, and that's about it. You're down to two per cent in one of the polls today, which is very, very low indeed. And the founder of your party, Alan Sked, has basically said you should wind it up.

PN: Well, I'm sure Alan Sked would say that because he seems to say that every single election. But we do have members of the London Assembly as well and we still do have about 350 councillors right across the country. We knew that those local elections were always going to be the most difficult that we ever fought. They were made doubly difficult by the fact that Theresa May called the general election, so they were fought on national issues. However, you know, UKIP has a great future and I predict that after this election UKIP could be bigger than it's ever been before. Because if she begins to backslide, and I think that she will barter away our fisheries, I think there will be a deal on
freedom of movement, I think there will be a divorce bill. People did not vote for that last year.

AM: Okay, well let’s come to some of those issues directly. Let’s talk about Brexit. You’ve said that you’re going to hold her feet to the fire, you’re going to be guard dogs. How can you possibly be guard dogs if you don’t have many MPs?
PN: Well, it doesn’t really matter how many MPs that you have. Hang on, hang on, if you think back to 2013 we forced the then British Prime Minister David Cameron into offering a referendum he never wanted to give. But we didn’t have an MP at that time. What UKIP needs to do is it needs to be electorally viable, it needs to be going up in the polls, it needs to be doing well in local elections, and I predict that after this election UKIP will go up substantially and we will do very well indeed.

AM: You have said that there you were going to get into double figures with MPs. Can you really look me in the eye and tell me that’s going to happen?
PN: Well, do you know what? I was in Thurrock yesterday, I was in Dagenham yesterday, I was in Clacton. Where we’re strong we’re still strong. We’re doing very well.
AM: Could you win there? Could you win in those seats?
PN: Do you know what? There’s a good chance that I think we will be – we’re knocking on doors, we’re out campaigning, the response is great.

AM: You mentioned your immigration policy. This is in effect one in, one out, is that right?
PN: Yeah, I mean, it’s called balanced migration. It’s something Frank Field has been calling for for many years, Nicholas Soames. It basically boils down to the fact that we have a population problem in this country, and if we continue to allow a city the size of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne in net every year, which is what we’re doing every year at the moment, it’s a Birmingham every three
years, we’ll have a population of 80 million by the middle of this century, it’s unsustainable.

AM: So that is a very, very dramatic change from the situation we’re in now. And it means a lot – I mean, at the time of the referendum campaign, I can remember Nigel Farage saying that this was good news for people from New Commonwealth countries. For instance, we’re going to stop taking in the Europeans and there’d be better news. Let me give you an example of why it wouldn’t be, under your policy. There’s a Bangladeshi family and they’d like a family reunion. They’ve got aunties over there and they want to bring them here. Under your policy that would be effectively impossible wouldn’t it?

PN: Well, no because what we would do is we would have an Australian points-based system, so if you’ve got the skills that we require then yes, please come here and work, on a visa, just as it is in Australia, just as it is in Canada, just as it is in the United States. Because at the moment we cannot continue on the road that we’re on. And the other political parties want to tear away – I’ll give you an example: You know, when I brought this up on the debate the other night, I mean, the Greens, the Lib Dems, Plaid and indeed the SNP, they all laughed at me. They all want more immigration. We’re the only part with a sensible policy to reduce the numbers.

AM: Part of the reason they want more immigration is that they look at the condition of the British economy at the moment and that it does rely on a lot of migrant labour coming into this country at the moment. Now, the Office of Budget Responsibility has calculated that if we cut immigration down to 185,000 – so vastly more than you’re suggesting – that would cost the Treasury £6 billion a year in lost revenue. How much will your policy cost the Treasury?

PN: Well hang on, at the moment we’re allowing in about 350,000 net. What we’re saying is that we want to reduce that net figure
to zero. So there’ll still be people coming into the country, it’s not as if we’re going to pull up the drawbridge in any way, shape or form, but what we’re going to do – hang on, hang on, let me finish. What we’re going to do is this is going to be done over five years. So it means a lot of wriggle room. We need people to come into the country, they can come in and they can work. But you know, economics isn’t everything. It’s also about social cohesion, and at the moment we have communities which have been tipped upside down over recent years because too many people are coming to the country too quickly and not learning English and not integrating.

AM: What’s your message to that Bangladeshi family I was mentioning who want a family reunion? Is it actually you can have a family reunion but you’re better off to go and do it in Dhaka in Bangladesh than to do it in London?

PN: No, that will be tapered into our immigration policy. And we’ve got our manifesto launching on Wednesday and all of this will be ironed out and you can come back and interview me on that issue in a couple of weeks. But what I will say is that somebody has to get immigration under control because at the present moment in time we’re allowing too many people to come into the country. As I say, there’s been recent reports – hang on, hang on, there’s been recent reports in recent years by Dame Louise Casey, but Trevor Phillips, which show that integration is actually getting worse in this country, not better, and that is down in fact to the amount of people that are coming.

AM: Do you feel you’ve maybe taken over the leadership of UKIP at just the wrong time? It’s like a great big party, there was Nigel Farage and everyone was in the bar knocking back the pints and all the rest of it, and then it’s your turn. You go up to buy your round and you turn back and they’ve all scarpered. Is that not how it feels?
PN: No, no. Do you know what? I am leading UKIP in a completely different time to Nigel Farage. Of course when Nigel was leading we had a Conservative Prime Minister who wanted Britain to remain in the European Union. Now we’ve got Theresa May talking the talk without having to walk the walk yet. I think things will be different when she does have to walk the walk and that will start in September. But what I will say is that sometimes in politics –

AN: Natalie, we have run out of time.

PN: Thank you, Natalie. Thank you.

(ends)