Andrew Marr: A lot to cover Rona, good morning, thanks for coming in.

Rona Fairhead: Good morning.

AM: You heard Nicola Sturgeon there, something big is going to have to change in Scotland, is it not, in terms of the BBC’s offer to the Scottish people?

RF: I think it’s very clear and the public have been very clear, the licence fee payers, that they want more portrayal, more representation, not just in Scotland, across the nations and across the regions. And if you look at the –

AM: Does that mean more investment in Scotland, in specific terms?

RF: It means two things. It means that more work has been pushed out. BBC was very London-centric, now more than 50 per cent is outside London. That’s a good direction of travel. More is produced in Scotland and Wales and in Salford and around the country, that’s a good direction. What we need now is to make sure that’s sustainable, that people can look at their screens, see themselves, whether they’re Scottish, whether they are of a particular age group or from a particular ethnic group.
AM: What about a Scottish channel?

RF: Look, I think we are looking at all options right now. All options are being looked at. The important thing is that the people of Scotland feel they’re portrayed, they’re represented and that the news –

AM: Which they clearly know isn’t enough at the moment.

RF: No, I think that the statistics say that something has to be done to improve that. What I would say, though, is yes, we have to improve that, however the – one of the glories of the BBC is that it does reach all across the UK, it allows the UK to come together, the Scots watch Sherlock, enjoy Sherlock even though it’s made in Wales. Similarly the Welsh love Shetland, even though it’s made in Scotland. People benefit from the BBC, the international news, they benefit from so many things right across and almost 90 per cent of the Scottish people watch channels that are right across the country.

AM: So we’re now onto what the BBC is and what it should be through the charter renewal process. Do you think the BBC is going to emerge from this process as a radically different organisation?

RF: I believe it will be an improved organisation, radically changed? No. We have done a huge amount of work with the public, they are very clear, extraordinary support for the BBC. They want the BBC to be broadly as it is. In fact, 60 per cent want it to do more versus less than 10 per cent do less. The important thing is that it is not perfect but the public are very clear, they like the BBC they have. They want it to have – to inform, educate, entertain. But they also want to have some things changed, and
they’re very clear about what those are. They want it to be more ambitious, they want it to be more independent.

AM: These are very, if I may say so, quite vague-sounding things. I’m quite interested in the actual specific changes we might see. For instance, is the News Channel safe?

RF: We have now got a financial framework. That was agreed with the Chancellor. Absent any change, radical change to the BBC but the people who watch the programmes don’t want –

AM: Is that a yes or a no?

RF: I said everything is being looked at. Nothing is off the table, it’s a tough settlement, but the Executive will work out what it is that they need to cut, the efficiencies will be put – the priority will be on making sure the programmes, the stations that people listen to will be protected as much as possible. And I can’t say that anything is off the table, it’s not, but it’s very clear –

AM: So there will be further cuts you’re saying?

RF: We have been very clear from the start that everything will be done to improve efficiency, but that it is likely that some programmes and potentially some services will be affected. That is the nature of what has to be done, but the priority will be making sure that the programmes that the public love – the Wolf Halls, the sports, the news – will remain strong because the BBC is paid for by the public, that is what they want.

AM: Now, the Savile Report leaked, the Dame Janet Smith report, there’s been a leak of it. More than 60 attacks by Savile, including more than four rapes, you know, snuvelings, grovellings, horrible things going on behind the scenes, an appalling story which shows
the BBC – I know it was in the past – in a very, very bad light indeed.

RF: I agree. I mean I’m absolutely horrified. You – it’s an absolutely appalling behaviours that were allowed to pass unchecked. You have to think about the victims here. They have suffered so much, incredibly traumatic and I think we have to –

AM: And we failed. We failed as an institution did we not?

RF: We – we failed. The BBC needed to do better. I think that you have to admire their courage to come forward. Only if people have the courage to come forward can we understand what happened and learn the lessons. The BBC has made a huge amount of changes. Changed its culture, changed its processes, and this is one thing I can say to you, Andrew, and this is really important. If Dame Janet Smith comes with any further changes that are needed they will be done. And I stand in front of you to say the Trust will ensure that the management feet is held to the fire to make sure that those changes are implemented and as quickly as possible.

AM: Well that’s interesting because Dame Janet Smith says that she thinks it’s possible there is – there is a specific Savile but there could be somebody in the BBC now abusing and bullying people.

RF: Now, now I would – I would hang on there Andrew. This – what you’re talking about is a leak of an early release of the report. I think out of respect to the victims we have to wait until the formal report is published. Dame Janet Smith, very senior judge, we have asked her to work, she has worked for several years. She has to make sure that this is right, that the evidence is right and will make her assessment. I am very happy once the report is published to come back and talk about it. But let me stand back and talk about – let me talk about the principle.
AM: Okay, well let’s put the report to one side then.

RF: Let me talk – I agree.

AM: And let me just ask you again. Is it possible that even now there is a very, very high profile, much regarded BBC quotes, ‘talent’ quotes person behaving badly and still that culture of deference and hostility to whistle blowers and a feeling that you know you look upwards and you’re very worried about what your bosses are saying, stops that being public?

RF: We have to create an environment where people feel confident to raise their hands and to say this is not acceptable. I think we need that in society but particularly in the BBC. The BBC has put in all sorts of measures to protect children. Children are now - they now have chaperones, there are screenings done of people who are involved with children. They’re put in a very comprehensive whistle blowing line. Everything that we can think of that has been done, that can be done is being done and that’s my assurance to you. Any further changes to make it even safer will be done.

AM: Some people say that you Rona Fairhead shouldn’t be in charge of the BBC Trust because of your involvement in HSBC in the past which was in turn involved in helping British citizens, well off people avoid their tax in Switzerland. What do you say to them?

RF: Well let me say, what happened in HSBC, behaviour that was criminal, behaviour that was against the practices of the bank. We have said as a bank that we accept responsibility and we’ve said that we are deeply sorry for any reputational damage and what happened. What we chose to do was to stay and fight. There has been enormous change
AM: And you knew nothing about this at all at the time? Even though you were in charge of the Committee?

RF: I – I – No. We actually had independents come in with information, this was not disclosed. Improvements have to be made and the reason I stayed was because the board asked me to stay, but more importantly the regulators with whom I work did. But I have to say my focus is now on the BBC, we need a BBC that the public want, they want it independent, they want it to be broad –

AM: And they don’t want this programme to go over, so we have to finish. Rona Fairhead thank you very much indeed.

Ends