

Gordon Brown speech in Greenock

- Manchester 'a global symbol of courage, defiance and unity' following terrorist atrocity, says Gordon Brown during speech
- As General Election campaigning restarts, he warns Conservative plans would leave more than 20million Briton hit with £1,000-a-year fall in household incomes by 2020
- Tory Britain a 'stagnation nation' as wages lag behind prices and benefit and tax credit cuts bite, says former PM
- Brown identifies families £1,000, £2,000 or £4,000 worse off by 2020
- Only top third will see living standards rise. When Tories say they are 'about the many and not the few', they mean hurting the many and helping the few
- North England, Scotland and Wales to suffer biggest hits with one quarter of population officially living in poverty – 5 million of them children

Gordon Brown today said that Manchester has become 'a global symbol of courage, defiance and unity' following Monday's terrorist atrocity which killed 22 people.

During a speech in Greenock, Inverclyde, the former Prime Minister said:

"Today and in the days and weeks ahead we will shed tears at the loss of so many children and young people.

"Too many lives have been taken but I say: They cannot take our unity, our solidarity, our support for each other.

"Hearts have been broken but our resolve remains unbreakable.

"Lives have been destroyed but our spirit is indestructible.

"They may think we are vulnerable but our strength of shared purpose makes us invulnerable.

"In the hours and days following the attack Manchester has become a worldwide symbol of courage, defiance and unity.

"To those who are doubters and who believe that terrorism will make us weak through fear, divide our communities and shatter our spirit...let them go to Manchester."

As campaigning restarted, Mr Brown also unveiled astonishing evidence showing that by 2020 more than 20million Britons will see a £20-a-week fall in living standards.

Almost 45 per cent of the British population – 23million people – will be poorer, and on average their households £1,000-a-year worse off, by the start

of the next decade, according to the alarming new figures.

And he warned that the Tories, if triumphant on June 8, will continue hurting families completing a 'decade of decline' with no end in sight to their slashing of the value of tax credits and child benefits.

Officially, the cuts and a raft of other shameful Tory policies are set to leave 15.7million British people – one quarter of the entire population – living in poverty by the end of the next parliament, according to the IFS.

Five million of them will be children, the former Prime Minister said in his speech today.

As hardship bites and a rise in family income comes to a juddering halt, grim new projections by the Resolution Foundation forecast the poorest third of working-age households, covering around 18 million adults and children, will see their average incomes fall by 10 per cent over the next few years.

And the Conservatives, according to the former Prime Minister, are not being honest about the fall in incomes.

During a speech in support of Labour candidate for Inverclyde, Martin McCluskey, at Greenock's Beacon Arts Centre, Mr Brown said:

"In every election the central economic issue is: What is going to happen to living standards?"

"Between now and 2020/2021, 45 per cent of the population – 23million people – will take a financial hit and on average their households will be £1,000 a year or £20 a week worse off

"Why? Because wages will be rising more slowly than prices – especially for nurses, teachers, carers and others among five million public sector workers, who will see only a one per cent rise in wages while prices rise much faster.

"Areas facing job losses such as Wales, the North and Scotland will feel it even more acutely.

"We are a nation where the Tories are creating living standards stagnation.

"The value of children's benefits and tax credits are now falling even faster than predicted as inflation bites even harder than previously thought due to the unexpectedly fast pace at which prices are rising."

There is little escape from hardship for middle and lower income families according to the Resolution Foundation study.

Statistics show:

- A couple with two children and a full-time single earner on National Minimum Wage with a household income of £21,000 will be £1,000 worse off by 2020.
- A single earner with one child working part-time with a household income

- of £14,400 will be almost £2,000 (£1,900) worse off
- A working couple, one full time, one part time with three children and a household income of £32,100 – will be £3,000 worse off

Mr Brown added:

“The Tories talk about uniting the nation but rising poverty and worsening inequality will leave us more economically polarised and socially divided under Theresa May than at any time in living memory.

“The claim that her government is about helping mainstream Britain is undermined by the stark future of declining living standards ahead for the majority of people.

“The mainstream is being marginalised as the majority see their living standards fail to rise, or for millions, fall significantly.

“Conservatives talk about the many and the few but they are actually harming the many while helping the few.

“That’s why it’s essential to elect Labour MPs who get up in the morning to fight for social justice and will be voices for the mainstream – the middle and lower income Britain that is being hardest hit.”