

ENVIRONMENT: Benn joins anti-incinerator campaigner on visit to biofuel racing car

Green crusade gets minister's backing

By Mary Griffin
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

THE environment secretary is throwing his weight behind an anti-incinerator campaigner.

The Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP visited Coventry and Warwickshire in support of Nicholas Milton, who is hoping to win the new Kenilworth and Southam parliamentary seat for the Labour Party.

The pair visited Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce and Warwick University's environmental sciences department Warwick HRI where they saw the EcoOne biofuel racing car.

Mr Milton is campaigning against "unimaginative" incineration, urging local councils to devote resources to reducing and recycling waste instead.

Coventry City Council and Warwickshire County Council have made a joint bid for funding to re-



VISIT... Dr Guy Barker, Hilary Benn, Dr Steve Magg and Nicholas Milton

place the current London Road incinerator in Whitley with a bigger burner.

Mr Benn, said it would be "inappropriate" for him to comment on the bid because the Government has yet to approve or decline it.

But Mr Milton said residents were being dealt a "double whammy" if councils didn't change their focus to reducing and recycling waste in-

stead of burning it.

He said: "Clearly there have been problems with recycling here.

"The council only recycles 45 per cent of its waste and will be fined by the European Union if it doesn't hit 65 per cent.

"To get them out of that particular quandary they are considering a proposal from Cemex for a huge waste plant, three times the size of

the Albert Hall and resulting in 250 lorries a week passing through Long Itchington.

"The only other idea on the books is the incinerator in Coventry.

"This is instead of the councils leading a campaign encouraging you, me and businesses to do the three Rs - reducing, reusing and recycling.

"If they don't hit their recycling target it will be added to our council tax bills, so people are being double-whammied.

"It shows a lack of imagination and political will to get a proper campaign going.

"We should be looking to change behaviour rather than looking at incineration."

Mr Benn's government department Defra invited councils to submit a last-chance bid for PFI funding.

Mr Benn added: "We need a variety of things to deal with our waste."