

**COLDHAM**

# Farm hopes more otters will follow in green scheme

An award-winning “green” fenland farming group has already attracted an otter to its new artificial holt.

And farm manager Russell Armstrong hopes that it will encourage others to take up permanent residence on the Co-op’s 3,750-acre Coldham estate, near Wisbech.

While the country’s otter population has been gradually recovering in recent years, staff at Co-op Farms have been working with the local drainage authority, the Middle Level Commissioners, to create purpose-built homes for the protected species.

Cliff Carson, who is the environmental officer for the Middle Level, found evidence of otters on the riverbank of the farm and one has already been seen in the new holt.

The same otter returned on a number of occasions to the new holt, which suggests that others could use

it as a more permanent home, he said.

“The site at the Coldham farm is perfect for an otter holt as it is so secluded and it is now a key site in the network of holts we have created,” he added.

Co-op Farms, which is the country’s largest farmer, has started a “habitat heroes” project to help other key species including water voles, bats and red squirrels on its farms.

Mr Armstrong was excited about the project. “As Britain’s largest farmer we feel we have a responsibility to lead the way environmentally, and I’m delighted that our farm is taking part in this important national initiative.

“The habitat heroes project taking place at Coldham and five other sites across the country gives us the chance to go that bit further and look at ways we can really make our land work for local wildlife.”