

## F1 Irwell (Ramsbottom, Rawtenstall and Bacup)

The River Irwell arises from moorland springs on the moorland above Bacup and flows within a narrow, high-sided valley in a westward direction to Rawtenstall and then south to Ramsbottom. Tributary streams flow southwards through Lumb and Crawshawbooth cutting the high land of the Forest of Rossendale before joining the main valley. The character area also includes the separate wider valley of the river Spodden which runs south through Whitworth. On the steepest sides of the Irwell there are outcrops of Millstone Grit creating a gorge-like landform, and in the deepest parts of the valley the north facing slopes remain in almost permanent shade. Along the valley bottom the towns of Rawtenstall, Bacup and Waterfoot merge to form a dense ribbon of urban and industrial development. The urban areas contain many fine buildings representing some of the South Pennines most important industrial -heritage. The Irwell valley is distinctive for the relatively small amount of woodland compared, for example, to the valleys to the west. Within the dense urban centres there is always an awareness of the proximity of wilder countryside with views up to the moorland edge, although in many areas extensive quarrying has disfigured the skyline view. The essential landscape character of the area is created by the juxtaposition of the deep river valley with its important areas of industrial heritage and the wild moorland.