

Northumberland IFCA European Lobster (*Homarus gammarus*) Fishery Status Report 2026

Landings and Effort

Landings data are collected monthly from shellfish catch returns submitted by permitted vessels to NIFCA. These returns provide detailed information on fishing effort and landings of key commercial species, offering valuable insights into trends within the NIFCA district. A summary of key statistics from the European lobster (*Homarus gammarus*) fishery is presented in the Multiple Indicator Framework (MIF) (Table 1).

Landings per unit effort (LPUE), expressed as kilograms landed per 100 pots hauled (kg/100 pots), is a critical metric for analysing seasonal and temporal trends in the fishery (Figure 1). Since 2011, LPUE has remained relatively stable, aside from seasonal variation, however, there has been a consistent and notable increase in mean LPUE since 2021. This was particularly evident in 2025, where mean LPUE was the highest on record for the NIFCA district at 18.46 kg/100 pots. LPUE in 2025 was consistently higher across all months when compared to 2024, however the most notable differences were observed across the summer months. In particular, the LPUE in June 2025 indicated an earlier start to the typical lobster season, where LPUE was around 32% higher than June 2024.

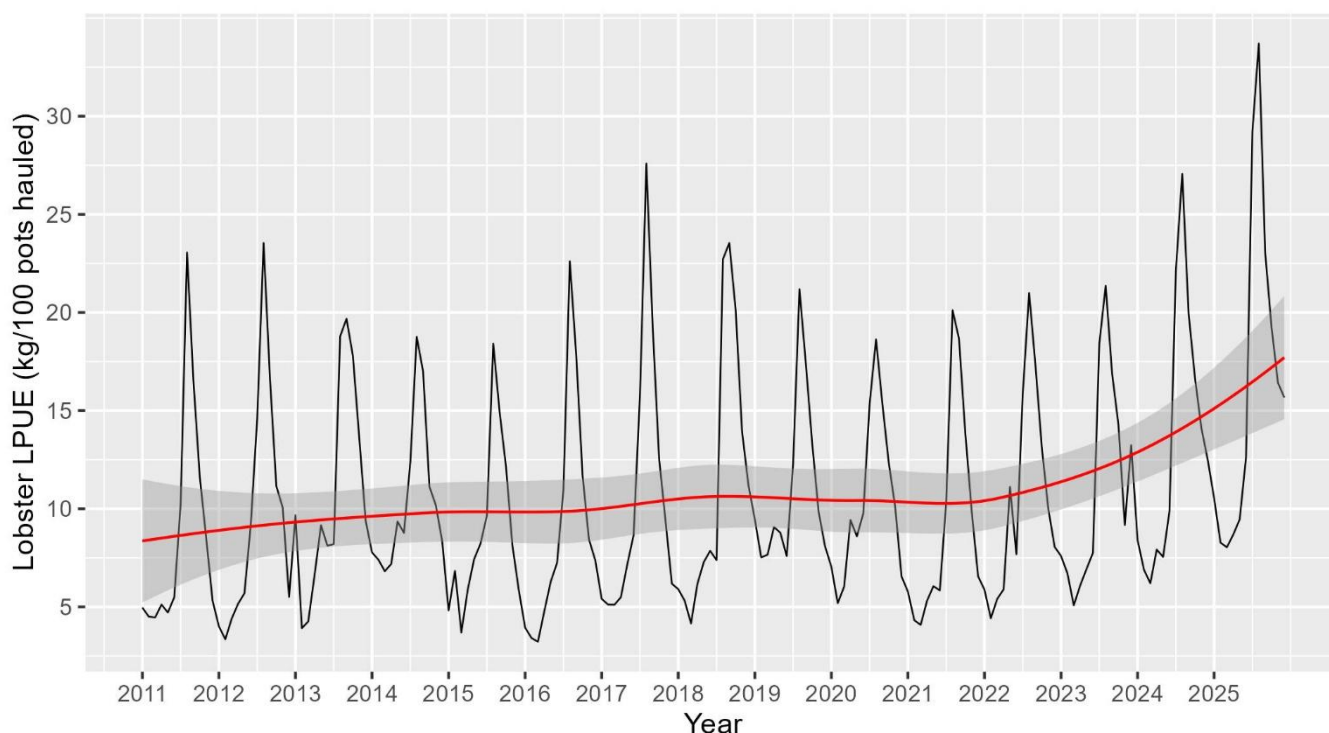


Figure 1: Monthly lobster landings per unit effort (LPUE) data 2011-2025, including a moving average across the same period (red) with a 95% confidence interval (grey shading), highlighting the seasonal variation in LPUE, but overall increasing trend over time and increased LPUE in 2024.

It is unclear as to the driver of this increased LPUE, and earlier start to the season in 2025. Overall effort (pots hauled) increased by 8% (~170,000), however landed weight increased by around 30%

when compared to 2024. The number of active vessels within the NIFCA district in 2025 remained the same as was reported in 2024 (65), the first year to not report a decline in the number of active vessels since 2020.

Landed weight increased to 418 tonnes, which is the highest landings value since 2011 (Figure 2). This increased landed weight corresponded to a 25% increase in the landed value to £6.17 million. Landed weight of lobster in the NIFCA district for 2025 accounted for 23% of all lobster landed into English ports in 2025, up from 18% in 2024.

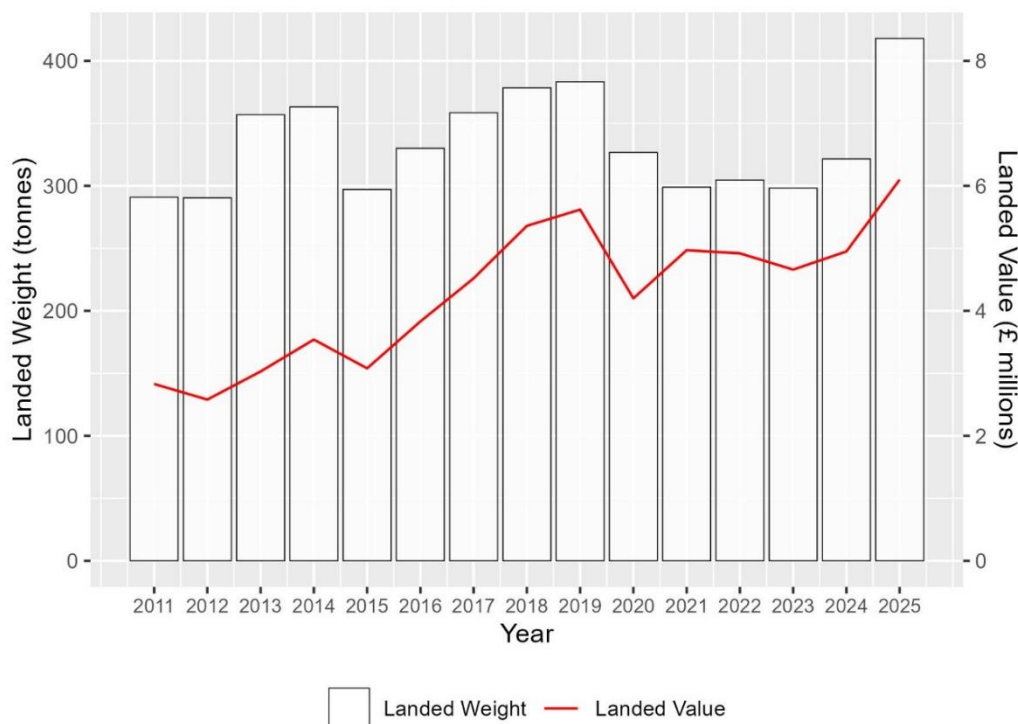


Figure 2: Lobster landed weight and landed value taken from permit returns and officer reports for price/kg with the estimated value of landed weight from the fishery annually.

Biometric Data

Biometric data are collected through a combination of offshore sampling on board fishing vessels, targeted fleet sampling at sea, and shore-based sampling of landed catches.

The data gathered includes measurements of individual lobster sizes to assess population structure, both above and below the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS). Figure 3 presents the size distribution of lobsters sampled during offshore surveys from 2020 to 2024, alongside data collected in 2025. A summary of sample numbers, average size, and maximum size is provided in Table 1. Since 2012, NIFCA officers have measured 45,227 lobsters, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the local lobster population and enabling the identification of trends in size and sex distribution.

Post-hoc Fisher’s exact tests identified no statistically significant decreases in the proportion of lobsters within any size class in 2025 when compared with the amalgamated 2020-24 data (adjusted $p > 0.05$). However, a statistically significant increase was observed in the proportion of female lobsters measuring 70-75mm carapace length, which increased by 3.9 percentage points in 2025 compared with 2020-24 (adjusted $p = 0.0045$). No identifiable trends were observed in median animal size during offshore surveys, with both sexes displaying inter-annual variation, but remaining stable (Figure 4).

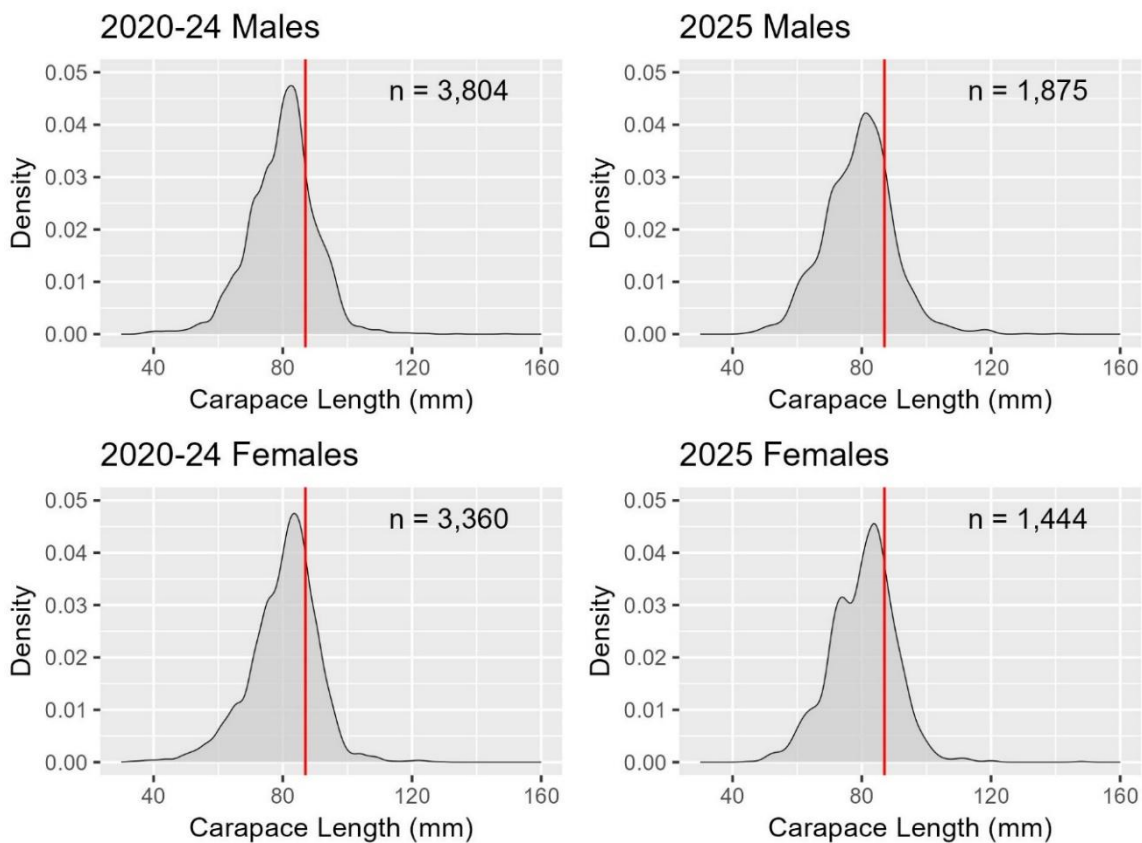


Figure 3: Amalgamated size distribution density plots of lobster measured during offshore surveys between 2020-2024, compared to size distributions observed during offshore surveys in 2025, with the MCRS of 87mm indicated in red.

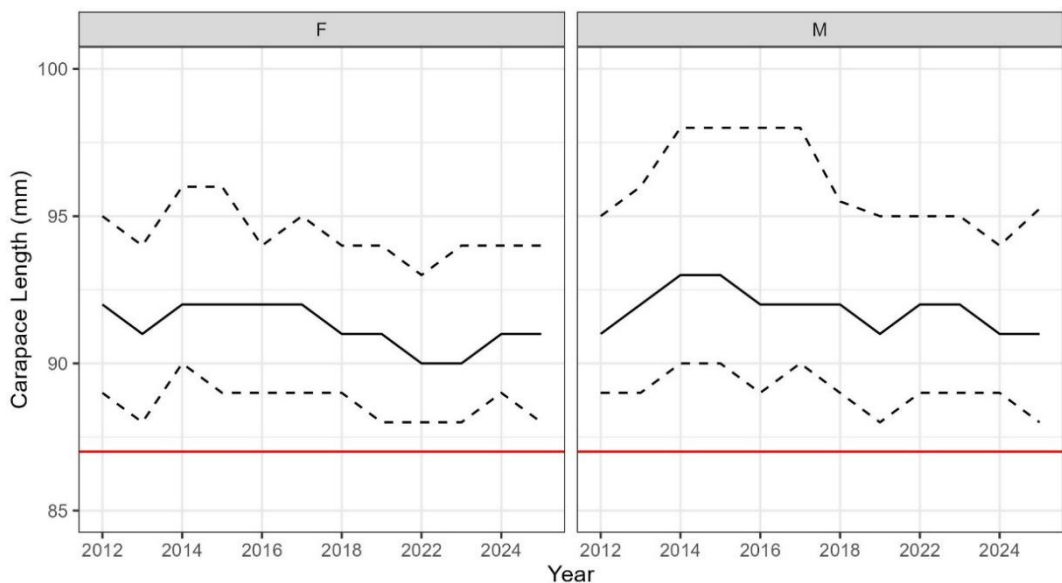


Figure 4: Median animal size of animals measured above the MCRS during offshore surveys. Dashed lines denote the 95% upper and lower confidence intervals. The red line indicates the 87mm MCRS.

Table 1: European Lobster (*Homarus gammarus*) multiple indicator framework.

Fishery Overview	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Value Ref	Data Source
Total Landings (NIFCA)	363.13	297.06	330.06	359.09	378.10	383.23	326.72	298.92	304.56	298.17	321.55	423.02	Tonnes	NIFCA Returns
Amble Landings	63.62	54.93	65.45	70.76	65.22	62.25	47.12	43.52	40.56	43.27	46.84	58.90	Tonnes	NIFCA Returns
Blyth Landings	26.32	23.99	32.54	28.12	33.19	44.73	38.53	33.54	33.76	39.87	37.37	51.76	Tonnes	NIFCA Returns
Burnmouth Landings	53.57	43.46	52.03	40.65	65.30	56.57	46.34	46.55	44.65	40.51	44.19	44.94	Tonnes	NIFCA Returns
Holy Island Landings	62.51	52.14	61.13	69.85	61.85	57.25	50.79	45.50	47.29	47.61	50.10	75.12	Tonnes	NIFCA Returns
Seahouses Landings	69.58	57.57	47.85	64.30	71.09	82.38	77.40	58.76	69.98	62.12	66.62	94.07	Tonnes	NIFCA Returns
Total Effort (Pots Hauled)	3.14	3.02	3.12	2.91	2.89	3.12	2.75	2.77	2.47	2.38	2.10	2.29	Million	NIFCA Returns
Total Effort (Pots Set)	37.98	36.58	33.80	34.39	35.94	37.74	39.64	39.70	35.72	33.48	28.30	30.32	Thousand	NIFCA Returns
Q1 Catch Distribution (% of Annual Total)	10	9	6	10	7	13	9	8	7	9	8	9	Q1 %	NIFCA Returns
Q2 Catch Distribution (% of Annual Total)	17	19	13	12	12	16	14	11	15	15	13	14	Q2 %	NIFCA Returns
Q3 Catch Distribution (% of Annual Total)	54	50	61	61	54	55	56	59	58	59	57	58	Q3 %	NIFCA Returns
Q4 Catch Distribution (% of Annual Total)	19	22	21	16	27	16	21	22	20	17	21	20	Q4 %	NIFCA Returns
Primary Reference Points	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Value Ref	Data Source
Mean LPUE	11.58	9.80	10.58	12.32	13.07	12.30	11.64	10.80	12.35	12.50	15.28	18.46	KG/100ph	NIFCA Returns
Economic	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Value Ref	Data Source
Average Annual Price	9.74*	10.37*	11.61*	12.62*	14.16*	16.75	14.71	18.83	20.17	18.54	19.14	17.29	£/kg	NIFCA IFCO Reports
Gross Catch Value	3.54	3.08	3.83	4.53	5.35	5.62	4.20	4.97	4.92	4.66	4.95	6.17	£ Million	NIFCA Returns
No. Active Vessels	80	75	70	73	85	74	89	82	77	69	65	65	#	NIFCA Returns
No. Employment	168**	158**	147**	153**	179**	155**	187**	172**	162**	114	113	113	#	NIFCA IFCO Reports
Biometric	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Value Ref	Data Source
Number of Animals Measured	11,428	8,685	1,095	3,257	3,232	1,022	110	419	1,992	4,945	1,250	4,196	#	NIFCA Survey
Average Carapace Length M (mm)	80	80	81	79	80	77	68	79	83	81	87	82	mm	NIFCA Survey
Average Carapace Length F (mm)	81	81	81	81	80	81	71	78	83	81	86	83	mm	NIFCA Survey
Max Carapace Length M (mm)	142	142	153	136	140	125	128	122	149	126	151	163	mm	NIFCA Survey
Max Carapace Length F (mm)	145	154	128	143	135	112	126	105	123	129	123	148	mm	NIFCA Survey
Sex Ratio (% Female)	49.6	47.5	48.2	51.9	47.9	61.4	48.2	52.0	50.1	44.6	45.6	45.4	%	NIFCA Survey

*This was taken from MMO landings data but has now changed to IFCO reports to allow for more region-specific figures.

**This is calculated by using an approximate crew number of 2.1 per vessel throughout the district. This is taken from a 2019 Effort Report by officers.